

2003

## School improvement through site -based management practices

Annie Lunette Todd

*College of William & Mary - School of Education*

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**SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT THROUGH SITE-BASED  
MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**

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**A Dissertation**

**Presented to**

**The Faculty of the School of Education  
The College of William and Mary in Virginia**

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**In Partial Fulfillment**

**Of the Requirement for the Degree**

**Doctor of Education**

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**by**

**Annie Lunette Todd**

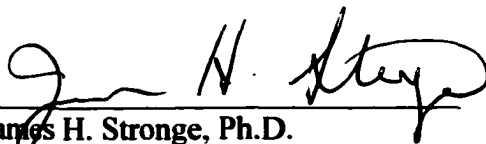
**March 2003**

**SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT THROUGH SITE-BASED  
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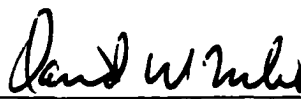
**by Annie Lunette Todd**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**The purpose of this single site case study was to examine administrators', teachers', and guidance counselors' perceptions of site-based management components and school improvement. The study addressed the following three questions:**

- 1. What are the perceptions of experienced teachers toward key aspects of site-based management (shared decision making, school climate, and student success)?**
- 2. What factors do experienced educators identify with promoting the successful implementation of site-based management components (shared decision making, school climate, and student success)?**
- 3. What factors do experienced educators identify with hindering the successful implementation of site-based management components (shared decision making, school climate, and student success)?**

**The study employed both quantitative and qualitative methodology.**

**Administered to only experienced teachers with three or more years of teaching, a questionnaire was used to collect data for three sub-scales: shared decision making, school climate, and student success. To answer question one, descriptive statistics were reported, and an ANOVA was used, resulting in no significant difference among the sub-scales. Qualitative data were collected from a focus group comprised of the School Improvement Team and from semi-structured interviews to identify factors promoting and hindering the successful implementation of site-based management components.**

**Results indicate that the implementation of SBM strategies was overall positive. Participants' responses revealed that shared decision making is an effective strategy for**

improving the school. Furthermore, the school climate is conducive to teaching and learning, and students are successful at this recently recognized Blue Ribbon School. As a professional community, the administrators and teachers collaborated to develop the vision, mission, and school improvement plan, especially with a focus on student achievement. Although the results were positive overall, participants also identified barriers, such as time, funding, and lack of technological assistance, sometimes hindering improvement efforts.

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**SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT THROUGH SITE-BASED  
MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

**Because American schools have not fulfilled the promise of universal education that American democracy espouses for all children, reformers have continued to attack the performance of schools. Incorporating the tenet, “All students can learn” in mission statements, the educational system has recognized that all children can learn and has realized the need to restructure to serve all populations of children. Although millions of students have been successful, there are millions of other students whose needs schools do not accommodate (Bowsheer, 2001). Dissatisfied with the quality of school performance, the public has increased demands for restructuring the educational system across America. In their discussion on restructuring American public schools, Barnett and Whitaker (1996) expounded three rationales for the public’s dissatisfaction with schools:**

- 1. Indicators, such as declining test scores, a reduced capability to compete in the global economic market, and graduates’ readiness levels for the job market, signify that schools are not meeting society’s needs.**
- 2. Those closest to the level of the students should be empowered to make decisions that affect student outcomes. Specifically, teachers should be treated as professionals who can assess best the needs of their students.**
- 3. Market forces and accountability are often the impetus for reform. Advocates of this claim argue that schools are not forced to change because of little competition for their services.**

**Not debilitated by the avalanche of policies, programs, and regulations that most states generated in the 1980’s, the National Governor’s Association adopted restructuring as part of its**

educational agenda for the twentieth-first century (Cohen, 1988). As astute politicians, the governors were responding to constituents' outcry for improvements "in the efficiency and productivity of schools, in tune with massive restructuring in business, industry, and agriculture and with rapid demographic and social changes" (Prasch, 1990, p.1). Ironically, these were similar problems American schools experienced in the nineteenth century.

The perceived current status of American schools has continued to receive public criticism regarding the performance of the nation's schools. An education manifesto by the Center for Educational Reform (1998) stated that

... today's high school seniors had not even started [school] when the Excellence Commission's report was released. A whole generation of young Americans has passed through the education system in the years since. But many have passed through without learning what is needed. Since 1983, over 10 million Americans have reached the 12<sup>th</sup> grade not even having learned to do basic math. Almost 25 million have reached the 12<sup>th</sup> grade not even having learned to read at the basic level. Over 20 million have reached the 12<sup>th</sup> grade not knowing the essentials of U.S. History. And those are the young people who complete their senior year. In the same period, over 6 million Americans dropped out of high school altogether. The numbers are even bleaker in minority communities. In 1996, 13% of all blacks aged 16 to 24 were not in school and did not hold a diploma. Seventeen percent of first-generation Hispanics had dropped out of high school, including a tragic 44% of Hispanic immigrants in this age group. (p. 1)

Rose and Gallup (2001) also expressed concerns about the status of American education in the *33rd Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools*. Respondents were asked to grade the nation's schools and their own community

**schools. Results indicate that respondents assigned higher grades to their community schools with a combined percentage of A's and B's climbing to 51% for all respondents to 62% for public school parents and to 68% when these same parents assigned grades to the community schools their oldest child attends, reflecting the highest rating in the poll's 33 years. When grading the nation's schools, only 23% of the respondents assigned an A or B. Respondents also identified the biggest problems facing schools today are lack of school funding and lack of discipline. In fact, 68% reported that the quality of education in schools depended upon allocation of funding. Other significant problems, included in the top five, were fighting/violence/gangs, overcrowded schools, and use of drugs/dope. Moreover, 54% of the respondents indicated that schools need a varied curriculum as well as an emphasis on basic courses. In addition, 81% noted that students reach only a small part of their potential. Although respondents reported that schools can do a better job in closing the achievement gap among white, African-American, and Hispanic students, 72% of them supported reforming the existing system instead of utilizing public funds for choice and private schooling.**

**Even though much of the rhetoric on the need to restructure is convincing, there is not much information on how to restructure. Perhaps, this is the case because reformers do not necessarily define this term similarly. However, as the term restructuring implies, this type of research reform effort focuses on fundamental changes in the structural patterns of educational organizational problems. "The underlying assumption is that organizational problems typically originate from inappropriate structures or inadequate systems and can be resolved through restructuring or developing new systems" (Bolman & Deal, 1991, p. 48). To clarify the meaning of restructuring, Barnett and Whitaker (1996) synthesized common elements from viewpoints on**

the term. According to them, the enumerated indicators below describe a restructured school environment:

1. Allowing those at the school site to make decisions on such issues as personnel selection, budget oversight, curriculum development, scheduling, and staff development;
2. Developing an integrated curriculum that focuses on higher-order thinking skills and on student-centered learning;
3. Altering the reward and salary structure for teachers and administrators;
4. Establishing new forms of student performance assessment and accountability;
5. Establishing new forms of student performance assessment and accountability systems;
6. Changing the roles and relationships between principals, teachers, and central office personnel;
7. Involving the total school community, including community groups and service agencies;
8. Encouraging procedures for obtaining waivers from local, state, and federal regulations. (pp. 6-7)

These elements indicate that the pendulum has swung again to decentralization for the early twenty-first century.

In deference to decentralization, researchers have observed that decentralization has emerged again as the organizing principle of the educational reform movement. According to Mirel (1990), “decentralization is one of those recurring elements of educational reform. The history of school decentralization, like that of back to basics or the open classroom, is a history

of perpetual motion, rising and falling but never fading away” (p. 4). Bimber (1993) stated that decentralization will decrease the bureaucratic and hierarchical structure of schools and will have positive effects on American public education. Moreover, he commented, “It has almost been an article of faith, that greater freedom from the effects of centralized bureaucracy, hierarchy, and administrative rules will serve the interest of improving U.S. schools” (p. 1). In addition, Hargreaves and Hopkins (1996) noted that school improvement “implies a very different way of thinking about change than the ubiquitous ‘top-down’ approach so popular with policy makers” (p.234). They further explained that a concentrated emphasis on the internal context of the school does not ignore the external environment. According to them, when “schools adapt external changes to internal purpose, they usually improve” (p. 33). Hopkins (1996) further described the influence of the external environment on policy and school improvement:

Although policies set directions and provide a framework, they do not and cannot determine student outcomes. It is also the case that the most effective school improvement strategies seem to be internal rather than external to the school...What is needed is ‘implementation-policy’ that is concerned with the process as well as the substance of change at the teacher and school level. (p. 41)

As the American school system has forged through one restructuring/reorganizing battle after another, the concept of site-based management (SBM) has emerged with the prospects of reorganizing with students in the forefront. Proponents of school reform have advocated that site-based management has the potential to permit individual schools to resolve school problems. More specifically, site-based management attempts to restructure the delegation of authority and the decision-making processes. When the state or central bureaucracy delegates authority to individual schools, school personnel make decisions regarding better programs for students

because they know their students' needs (Lasher, 1997; Schlecty, 1997; Schmaus, 1996; Wohlsetter, 1996). Additionally, the costly support of an overstaffed central bureaucracy will diminish as school staffs make more curricular and instructional decisions at the school. Perhaps, the students can benefit from the funds resulting from a decrease in central staff. Nevertheless, even though site-based management supplants some of the authority of central office, public schools will still need the support of school boards, superintendents, specialists, and community stakeholders to fructify success.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Changes in American society have been influencing the organizational structures that school administrators utilize to govern schools. The rapidly changing demographics, heightened public interest, financial and social problems, to name a few, appear to have corroded the progress of school improvement, especially student achievement. To cure the ills of American schools, reformers recommended site-based management as a stand-alone reform in response to crises in schools during the 1980's and mid 1990's.

Site-based management is a restructuring approach that shifts the locus of control for some decisions from central office to the school site. Even though site-based management has surfaced as a buzzword in restructuring efforts, it still remains conceptually elusive because it can vary from one district to another or from one school to another in the same district. Nevertheless, many school districts adopted SBM without implementing, monitoring, and evaluating a plan to make the transition from a traditional management approach to SBM approaches (Bauer & Bogotch, 1997; Cheong, 1996). Therefore, for many years, early SBM initiatives have existed in such haphazard forms without a clear focus on school performance. Because of this thrust to implement SBM, often without clear parameters or a focus, school

districts initially viewed SBM as an end in itself (Drury, 1999). If schools utilized school councils, sites rarely defined council roles, provided team building training, and targeted student learning (McCloseky, Mikow-Porto, & Bingham, 1998; Wohlstetter & Mohrman, 1996). Instead, schools expected site-based teams to set their own guidelines and address issues, usually non-related to student achievement (Bauer & Bogotch, 1997; Levey & Acker-Hocevar, 1998).

As a result of districts implementing SBM as a reform entity in the 1980's until the mid-1990's, reviewers and researchers criticized SBM literature and the lack of empirical evidence relative to the earlier attempts or studies. After conducting a meta-analysis of over 200 studies, Malen, Ogawa, and Kranz (1990) described the nature of the literature on site-based management:

...most writings on school-based management are either project descriptions, status reports, or advocacy pieces. Those sources tend to rest on the impressions of a single individual and emphasize exceptional cases, such as achievement attained in a small number of the most successful pilot schools. (p. 30)

They also reported that there exists very little quantitative research on site-based management. Barnett and Whitaker (1996) stated that "there is an overabundance of conceptual work . . .; however, little empirical research, especially longitudinal studies" (pp. 3-4). Furthermore, other researchers indicated that there are few systematic studies of SBM and that much of the literature comprises glowing advocacy pieces, plan descriptions, and anecdotal accounts of what works (Bauer, 1997; Sharpe, 1996). Barnett and Whitaker (1996) suggested that the lack of studies may be due to the newness of systemic reform efforts requiring a massive change in educational structures and the understanding of the complexities of such change.

**In addition, researchers reported that poorly designed and poorly implemented stand-alone SBM programs had little or no effect on improving student achievement (Bauer, 1997; Drury, 1999; Holloway, 2000; Latham, 1998). After an extensive review of the literature, Leithwood and Menzies (1998) concluded that empirical evidence relative to SBM engendering improvement has not been substantial. They cited the following reasons for the lack of evidence: (1) difficulties associated with measuring change and SBM outcomes, (2) politics on the local, state, and national levels, and (3) change of work practices requiring significant collaboration among teachers, principals, and district personnel.**

**Some researchers have found that the relationship between site-based management and student achievement is problematic. Studying the impact of site-based decision-making strategies and methods on student achievement in high schools, Everett (1998) investigated the degree to which SBM strategies and methods impacted percentile scores measured by the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TASS), which comprises three examinations – reading, writing, and math. Based on the site-based committee member responses, she categorized the schools into one of three SBM categories: low-level, moderate-level, and high-level management. Her findings indicated that there was no significant difference among the three levels of SBM and the three areas of focus on the TASS. Moreover, in her study, Bell (1996) substantiated evidence that the effect of site-based management on standardized test scores warrants further investigation. After conducting a study of 35 elementary schools over a period of three years, she concluded that the socioeconomic status of the students contributed the most to the variations among the scores. An analysis of the data indicated a decrease of test scores in 18 of the sample schools and an increase of scores in 13 scores. The scores of the remaining schools did not change.**



On the other hand, recent research reported that SBM integrated with a comprehensive approach to school reform rather than a stand-alone approach can augment school improvement, including benefiting instructional programs and increasing student achievement. A large-scale study of SBM sponsored by the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools (CORS) and conducted by Marks and Louis (1997) documented that school culture improved when administrators empowered teachers to make decisions beyond the classroom but decisions still related to student learning. Such empowerment promoted a strong sense of professional community. In another recent study of SBM, Leithwood and Menzies (1998) cited evidence of increased teacher commitment and morale, collaboration among teachers, an increased school-wide focus on professional development, and acceptance of accountability. In addition, a study conducted through the Chicago Consortium of School Reform (CCSR) concluded that teacher participation in decision-making in SBM schools related positively to improved instructional programs and to increased student learning (Smylie, Lazarus, & Brownlee-Conyers, 1996). Mork (1998) conducted a study SBM that comprised 2100 Western Washington state public schools teachers representing 111 elementary, middle, and high schools. He examined the relationship between the type of site-based management (e.g. shared decision making and degree of collaboration) and the extent to which teachers at their schools perceived the following had occurred: (1) improvement in student learning, (2) changes in school and/or classroom practices, and (3) the degree of restructuring. He found that teachers in schools with higher levels of site-based decision making (SBDM) and collaboration indicated statistically significant higher level of school-wide practices, including a emphasis on staff development and parental involvement programs. He also found that teachers in high SBDM/collaboration schools significantly decreased their heavy reliance on the textbook and lectures as modes of instruction and noted

higher rates of the use of alternative assessment procedures, the utilization of student portfolios, and teaming with another colleague. Furthermore, these teachers indicated higher increases in student learning. Thus, this study concluded that site-based management and shared decision making can be a viable education restructuring practice. In the urban district of Austin, Texas, more than one half of its students come from low-income families. Since the implementation of SBM, this district's annual dropout rate has decreased, and its standardized test scores have increased.

Still other recent studies have investigated the relationship between SBM and student achievement. Evaluating SBM in the Chicago Public Schools since 1988, the Chicago Consortium on School Reform (CCSR) recently presented a large-scale study, reporting evidence of learning gains that linked to the implementation of this governance change (Bry. Thum. Easton, & Luppescu, 1998). The CCRS also conducted a smaller five-year study of fourteen Chicago schools and presented another recent report that confirmed that changes in student achievement related to SBM from the adoption of the 1995 amendments to the 1988 Chicago School Reform Act (Hess, 1999).

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this single site case study research was to examine administrators', teachers', and guidance counselors' perceptions of site-based management components and school improvement. Specifically, this research collected data to address the following questions:

1. What are the perceptions of experienced teachers toward key aspects of site-based management (shared decision-making, school climate, and student success)?

2. What factors do experienced educators identify with promoting the successful implementation of site-based management components (shared decision making, school climate, and student success)?
3. What factors do experienced educators identify with hindering the successful implementation of site-based management components (shared decision making, school climate, and student success)?

### **Significance of the Study**

As Murphy (cited in Lawton, 1996) stated, “site-based management used by itself ... won’t do anything to help student achievement. But it can be helpful if employed in a school community already committed to teaching and learning.” However, the majority of research on site-based management has focused on this structure as a governance issue. Concerned with the implementation of the technology of site-based management as an end in itself, most studies have not addressed student improvement or focused on student outcome goals (Cotton, 1992). Although goals related to curriculum and instruction can powerfully impact student outcomes, SBM efforts rarely have addressed these areas (Cotton, 1992; Drury, 1999). Furthermore, the few studies that exist in the literature on student achievement measured student performance based on standardized tests (Banicky, Rodney, and Foss, 2000; Haynes-Pearson, 1997; Slavin & Madden, 1995; Wohlstetter et al., 1997). In some cases, test scores rose; in others, scores declined slightly or remained the same. As a result of this conflicting research on student achievement, researchers have found no direct link—positive or negative – between SBM and student achievement or other student outcomes (Beck & Murphy, 1996; Cotton, 1992). Although test scores are important indicators of student achievement, the present study will

address the need to encompass a wider spectrum of student outcomes such as passing rates, dropout rates, attendance, and post-secondary activities.

Implementing site-based management is more than a governance issue. As an approach, SBM affords principals and teachers the opportunity to identify problems and derive solutions in a timely manner. With the implementation of SBM components, school site stakeholders also can tailor their decisions to implement programs and strategies to address the needs of their schools and students. Because SBM can vary from school to school, this flexibility is crucial to any implementation of this approach (Barth, 1997; Schlechty, 1997; Wohlsetter et al., 1997). In light of the paucity of research on site-based management and school performance, this study may help fill a void in research examining the relationship between site-based management and school improvement in the areas of shared decision making, school climate, and student success. In addition, this study has the potential to provide insight into effectively empowering teachers to share in decision making as a collaborative community. Furthermore, this research may prove beneficial to schools planning to increase implementation of more components of site-based management.

Additionally, this study will address the need for a heightened understanding of the efficacy of SBM. Commenting on a research paradigm devolution, Sharpe (1996) expressed the need for further study and evaluation of SBM and its impact on school improvement. Wohlsetter (1996) also agreed that SBM has limited success when implemented as an end in itself or solely for compliance issues as opposed to being connected to the real work of schools. Therefore, the researcher will depict SBM as an integrated approach that has the potential to yield school improvement. For schools that plan to engage in a school renewal or school improvement process, this study may present a viable integrated restructuring approach. Also, substantiated

with quantitative and qualitative data, the results of this research may shed light on what components of site-based management and school improvement work and those that do not work effectively.

### **Definitions of Related Terms**

The researcher used the following definitions for this study:

1. **Decentralization** is a governance structure that shifts the locus of control over some school functions from a central administration to individual schools.
2. **Empowerment** is the “act of inclusion that fosters the notion of expanding or strengthening a leader’s power by involving others in the decisions of the organization” (Short & Greer, 1997). For the purpose of this study, empowerment is the practice of utilizing the expertise of school staff to attain school goals.
3. **Experienced educator** is defined by three or more years of experience in a public school setting as a principal, an assistant principal, a teacher, or guidance counselor.
4. **School climate** refers to the positive or negative perceptions of the school staff about the school.
5. **School improvement** refers to increases in school effectiveness or school development that have yielded a positive measure of success. This research will study school improvement in the areas of shared decision making, school climate, and student success.
6. **School restructuring** means to retain what has been successful (or sometimes improve) and to redesign those areas or aspects that have failed to yield desirable outcomes.
7. **Shared decision making** is the “philosophy and practice of including different perspectives in the process of making decisions for a school, a committee, a district, or another organization. This involvement may include input, advisory moments, or decision making (Brouse, 2001).

For the purpose of this study, shared decision making is a process or practice of involving key stakeholders in making decisions that will improve their quality of work life and student improvement at the individual school site.

8. Site-based management is an approach that emphasizes “delegating authority to the school instead of central office, shared decision-making model engaging various stakeholders and facilitative rather than directive leadership” (Cromwell, 2000, p.1). For the purpose of this study, site-based management is defined as a philosophy, an approach, or a strategy that delegates authority from central administration to individual schools to make decisions that affect school improvement.
9. Student success refers to indicators such as test scores, dropout rates, attendance, passing rates, and post-secondary activities.
10. Vision is a compelling mental picture depicting the difference between what exists in a school and what improvement will exist at a designated time in the future.

#### Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study are as follows:

1. Participants in this study are a principal, an assistant principal, teachers, and guidance counselors. Therefore, the results of the study cannot be generalized to other school staffs.
2. Teachers and guidance counselors are usually loyal to their schools and may not respond negatively about school improvement.
3. This study will be conducted in one high school whose district has not fully implemented a site-based management program.
4. This study examines SBM practices in one school. Therefore, results may not be generalizable to the entire county or other districts.

### **Assumptions**

1. Shared decision making at the local site has the potential to improve the overall effectiveness of a school.
2. School climate impacts the overall performance of a school.

### **Organization of the Study**

Chapter 1 included an introduction to site-based management as a form of decentralization. In addition, the introduction stated the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance, operational definitions, limitations, and major assumptions. followed by the organization of the study. In Chapter 2, the researcher will review related literature, describe methodology in Chapter 3, and conduct an analysis of the data in Chapter 4. The final chapter, Chapter 5, will provide a summary of the study, along with conclusions and recommendations for further research.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Review of the Literature**

#### **HISTORY OF THE GOVERNANCE OF AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Divided into four major sections, this chapter is designed to present a systemic review of literature and findings on SBM as a reform strategy. The first section examined a historical perspective of the governance of the American educational system as a need to reform American public schools. The second section overviewed the context of SBM – definitions, common characteristics, and advantages. The next section addressed the relationship between successful implementation of SBM and school improvement. The fourth section explored instructional practices and indicators of student success.

#### **The Beginnings**

Education always has been important to Americans. Since the seventeenth century, the American society has touted education as the road to upper mobility. As a result, reformers throughout the history of American schools have debated the type of governance structure that best contributes to the quality of school improvement or performance in American schools. Some argue that centralization, a top-down approach, is best, while others advocate decentralization, a bottom-up approach, to education.

Prior to 1900, decentralization was the governance structure of schools. In the rural areas, one-room schoolhouses dotted the countryside. Operation of this one-room school involved a teacher and usually a lay school board that governed as needed. As the effects of industrialization, specifically mass production of goods, impacted America, people migrated to cities and to find jobs. This increased population shift, along with child labor and compulsory attendance laws, created a need for larger and more comprehensive school systems. Thus, the one-room schools evolved into a substantial number of multi-room schools. Recognizing their



lack of expertise in instruction, school boards appointed a principal to operate the multi-unit schools but continued to manage the financial resources. As America became increasingly industrialized and as the multi-unit schools developed into multi-campus, the board appointed a superintendent. Subsequently, the board created layers of centralization with the addition of a business manager and specialists of every type. As school districts and school boards rapidly increased, control became even more centralized with district boards of education becoming the primary unit of management (Sewall, 1999).

In urban America, each city had many school districts organized around neighborhoods or wards, each with its own school board. Usually in urban areas, politicians called “ward bosses” appointed school boards and often assumed responsibility for maintaining facilities, selecting and requisitioning supplies and books, selecting vendors, determining general policies about curriculum, and staffing. However, local control by “ward bosses” led to corruption (Sergiovanni, Burlingame, Coombs, & Thurston, 1999).

Around 1900, reformers sought to eliminate the widespread corruption of the ward bosses, especially in the city. These bosses had corrupted the schools by awarding contracts to unqualified family members, accepting kickbacks, and threatening teachers’ job security. Educational and political reformers replaced ward bosses with citywide boards primarily comprised of business and professional men (Snauwaert, 1993). School board members were now either elected or appointed through nonpolitical offices. Moreover, reformers decreased the school board’s involvement in the daily operation of the school and assigned this responsibility to a superintendent (Snauwaert, 1993; Sewall, 1999).

## **Efficiency and Productivity**

In the early twentieth century, Taylor (cited in Palestini, 1999) advocated top-down management, division of labor, specialization, and a regulated work environment to increase the efficiency and productivity of industry. Reacting to the societal demands to operate schools more efficiently, educational leaders advocated utilizing Taylor's management principles, thus fueling an era of centralization. He believed that one could achieve maximum job efficiency through the scientific study of that job by experts. Furthermore, he purported that jobs should be broken down into minute parts and that workers should be retrained to yield the largest payroll from each motion and second spent at work. Taylor's principles were so widely accepted that many began to apply the principles of scientific management to other aspects of American life, such as military, the legal profession, the home, the family, the household, the church, and education (Conway & Calz, 1996; Sergiovanni, Burlingame, Coombs, & Thurston, 1999).

This industrial model resulted in schools being run like factories. Top-down management characterized this model, creating layers of managers of administrators to increase the efficiency of the school system and to supervise day-to-day operations (Sewall, 1999). When measured by Taylor's principles, the system of autonomous, small, locally controlled schools taught by generally trained teachers seemed wasteful and inefficient, thus providing an impetus for the school consolidation movement. In addition, the migration of people from the country to the city contributed to the consolidation of schools (Carlson, 1996). Between 1930 and 1950, the school population increased from 28 million to 46 million, while the number of school districts decreased by 400% (Lindelow, 1989, p. 155). In 1938, there were 119,001 districts; by 1990 there were 15,367 districts (Digest of Educational Statistics, 1991, p. 93).

During the Roosevelt Era, centralization of schools gained even more momentum. As a result of the agencies and bureaus that were created to deal with Depression problems, superintendents reinforced the notion to run their schools systems as bureaucracies were run. “The government structure of schools was, like government and industry, top-down with little input from clients of the system” (Marburger, 1985, p 5). However, devastated by the collapse of the stock market in 1929 and with the social unrest in the United States during the Great Depression, Americans began doubting the long-held belief that the business sector could resolve America’s problems.

### Early Arguments for Democratic Decentralization

Dissatisfied with schools resembling educational factories and with the inherent bureaucracy, democratic reformers voiced concerns that school administrators had become too autocratic and unresponsive to the needs of the students. During the 1920’s, Mary Follett (cited in Murphy and Beck, 1995) criticized the scientific concept of efficiency. In response, she introduced the idea of participatory leadership, “power with” rather than “power over” (p. 150). Instead of hierarchical structures, she suggested selecting the leadership structure and staff based on the nature of the problem. In addition to Follett’s work, Elton Mayo (cited in Sergiovanni et al., 1999) studied worker productivity in Western Electric’s Hawthorne plant in Chicago. This study concluded that workers are more productive under the following conditions: shared planning of varied work, friendly and democratic environment, and award of group incentives.

Forefront in advocating a shift from centralization to decentralization was John Dewey. Democratic reformers utilized Dewey’s article, “Democracy in Education” as an impetus to revisit decentralization of schools. In the following famous excerpt, Dewey (quoted in Murphy

**& Beck) posed questions about empowering individuals to share decision making about their jobs:**

**What does democracy mean save that the individual is to have a share in determining the conditions and the aims of his own work and that on the whole, through the free and mutual harmonizing of different individuals, the work of the world is better done than when planned, arranged, and directed by a few, no matter how wise or how good intent that few? How can we justify our belief in the democratic principle elsewhere, and then go back entirely upon it when we come to education? (p. 197)**

### **Teacher Council Movement**

**Employing Dewey's work, democratic reformers catapulted the teacher council movement from 1920-1929. This movement was perhaps the first major attempt to reverse the trend of centralization, which supported scientific management to increase efficiency of schools. According to Ortman (quoted in Murphy & Beck), the purpose of teacher councils was "the betterment of schools and education of children " (p. 1). He also delineated two goals of the teacher council movement: (1) "the derivation of workable politics" and (2) "the improvement of educational workers in service through policy determining participation" (p. 1).**

**Teachers protested administrators operating schools like factories and campaigned in several large cities to garner democratic participation in the administration of schools. According to Ortman (quoted in Murphy & Beck), teacher councils "attacked ten big problems in school administration" (p.33). Enumerated below are the big ten problems:**

- 1. Constructing or reorganizing courses of study**
- 2. Adopting textbooks and materials for teaching**
- 3. Establishing methods of instruction for subjects and classes**

- 4. Building up teacher training requirements and courses**
- 5. Constructing teacher rating systems**
- 6. Modifying school building plans**
- 7. Building up more comprehensive systems of reports**
- 8. Helping increase salaries**
- 9. Reorganizing the rules and regulations of the school**
- 10. Cooperating in community work (p.33)**

**The labor movement strongly influenced the teacher council movement. Paralleling industrial councils, teacher councils comprised elected representatives that sought to increase employee participation by giving input on policies that affect them and by participating in decision making to enhance their quality of work life.**

**In 1921, General Motors promoted decentralization in industry. This company shifted decision-making authority and accountability at lowest appropriate level and downsizing the number of levels in the organizational hierarchy. Other large companies implemented General Motors' decentralization model, including International Harvester in 1943 and Ford Motor company in 1946 (Carlson, 1996).**

**After the World War II until the late 1960's, teacher unions became more prevalent. As a result, administrators and teachers were often in conflict. Principals informed teachers of policies and expected them to accept and implement them. Sometimes, principals and staff informally conferred in the school's hallways or through quick meetings. Nevertheless, authority in the school gradually became more and more centralized, resulting in the union conflicts of the decade impairing collegiality (Taylor & Levine, 1991). In 1965, Herbert Klausman at the University of Wisconsin began a school improvement program, incorporating some school-based**

management techniques. This Individually Guided Education (IGE) school improvement program created research and instruction units in schools, which gradually evolved to comprise a school team -- the principal and teachers -- and required district support for coordination of a top-down and bottom-up effort (Taylor & Levine, 1991).

### **Quality of Work Life**

In the 1960's, American corporations began using the Quality of Work programs that are still popular today in private and public sectors. Vying with the success of Japanese corporations, American businessmen visited Japan corporations to discover the secrets of their success. The American corporations liked what they observed and subsequently implemented the program in their corporations using the title Quality of Work Life (Herman, 1993). According to Herman, private and public sectors also named this program Quality Circles, Employee Participation Circles, Job Enrichment Teams, Professional Development Teams, School Improvement Circles, and Working Groups. In addition, Herman defined this concept:

Quality Work Life (1) is a philosophy that states people are good, they want to help themselves, and their fellow employees, and their particular school organizations to improve; (2) has a goal of involving employees in improving the quality of their work environment, and (3) is a process which involves employees in problem solving and in employee satisfaction activities through action programs which the employees develop to improve the quality of their work life. (p. 64)

In 1978, Westinghouse became a model for implementing Quality Circles in other industries. The implications drawn from the implementation of Quality Circles at Westinghouse included the following: those directly affected solve problems best, participative management fosters a sense of ownership among workers, and the ability to influence change in the job is

directly related to morale and motivation. Tangible results included greatly increased productivity; intangible results included higher employee morale, less resistance to change, improved communication between employees and managers as well as between departments, and the development of a work environment characterized by learning, problem solving, and problem preventing (Carlson, 1996).

Other corporations that successfully implemented the Quality Circle included Honeywell, 3M Company, and Ford Motor Company. Quality circles at Ford Motor Company contributed to better product quality, many improvements in production, higher employee morale, improved efficiency, and reduced grievances and absenteeism (Carlson, 1996). Hansen (1990) indicated that these quality circles exhibited the following distinctive characteristics:

1. The voluntary association of members;
2. Information gathering and data-based decision making;
3. Formal brainstorming to insure participation;
4. Problems identified and defined by the group;
5. Analysis and interpretation by the group;
6. Recommendation and presentation by the group;
7. Involvement in the dissemination, implementation, and adaptation of the recommendation and plans; and
8. Evaluation of both the processes and outcomes. (p. 102)

Thus, the Quality circle brought individuals together in a constructive way to improve communication, solve problems, and make effective decisions.

### **Early Attempts at Site-based Management**

During the 1970's, some early site-based management (SBM) forms began to appear as an attempt to respond to the needs of increased desegregated and multicultural neighborhood and community schools. These programs were antecedents for site-based management (Carlson, 1996). Still other early indicators of a shift toward site-based management appeared in scattered districts during the 1970's and 1980's. In 1971, the Fleischman Commission proposed the development of school-based management in New York. As a result of state reform legislation, Monroe County, Florida, phased in site-based management, including an advisory council, between 1971 – 1976. Through grant funding and with the assistance of four universities, the superintendent, other central office staff, and principals received extensive training in team management and decision making. Fairfield-Suisun began decentralization in 1973, employing community and staff input in the budget process and delegating authority to purchase materials and equipment to school councils and principals. Also, in 1973 in Florida, the Governor's Citizens Committee on Education report promoted allocating funds to schools based on the needs of the students, developing educational objectives by those closest to the school level, determining curriculum based on the needs of the school site, and empowering parents to participate in decision making (Oliver, 1992). Moreover, in 1979, a Florida law allotted funds to establish an advisory committee at each school in the districts. The California's Early Childhood Act and School Improvement Program encouraged the inclusion of parent involvement and councils. Addressing desegregation and collective negotiations issues impacted the implementation of site-based management in Cleveland, Ohio, the Boston School District, and the San Diego School District. In addition, Minnesota, Oregon, and New Jersey received grant funding for site-based management (Carlson, 1996). Jefferson County, Kentucky, in 1986 at a



**grant-supported academy exercised flexibility in policies and procedures. In 1988, the Memphis School system formed a deregulated school district and waived guidelines so that the eight selected schools could establish decision making, assume increased responsibility for instruction, and develop local programs and services.**

### **National Crisis in American Schools**

**Dissatisfied with the failure of the reform efforts of the 1970's to meet the needs of a ever changing information-based society fueled state and national efforts to improve the performance of public schools by restructuring the American school system. The National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) assembled to address the needs of American public schools and published A Nation at Risk, a landmark report that described a national crisis of mediocrity in American public schools. Moreover, this report generated an unprecedented examination of public schools by America's political, educational, and financial communities. According to this report and a flurry of other literature, American schools were losing the global race in education. As Chubb (1988) commented:**

**In the early 1980's Americans awoke to discover that their public schools were failing them. Student test scores, declining for nearly two decades, showed American trailing the rest of the world's democracies in mathematics and science achievement...[Americans] worried whether the nation possessed the intellectual talent to revitalize its industries and compete with the technological sophistication of east Asia. (p. 50)**

**Another problem noted in these reports was that schools were not addressing the increasingly changing demographics of the nation. Cohn (1989) elaborated on this urgency:**

What gives this issue more urgency today is that the percentage of students who are at risk of poor academic performance or dropping out altogether – those drawn from poor and minority backgrounds – represents an increasing share of both population and our workforce. (p. 257)

Such literature of this first wave reform movement engendered national attention and prompted governors and state legislatures to initiate guidelines and mandates for local school districts to implement. For example, state legislatures and local school districts and local school boards required more credits for graduation, developed exit tests for graduations, restricted participation in extracurricular activities to students who maintained certain grade averages, and required more courses for teachers. In addition, teachers acquired more responsibilities but had little autonomy. Educators argued that they still had to contend with organizational structures that were appropriate for the Industrial Age but not for the Information Age (Bowsher, 2001). Even with these layers of centralization, this top-down approach did not fructify the desired outcome of educational excellence.

Comparing the performance of American students with that of students in other countries, critics continued to launch an attack on American schools around 1986. As Raywid (1990) asserted, ‘piecemeal supplements, or peripheral modifications that leave most school practices unaffected, are likely to prove futile. Nothing short of fundamental change affecting the practices of everyone within a school will suffice’ (p. 152). The Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy (1986) published *A Nation Prepared*, one of the most influential reports of this reform movement. This report recommended giving teachers more control over their work, accountability for student achievement, and incentives for school-wide improvement. Fueled with an arsenal of educational report cards from task forces, governors, commissions, and

education boards hailed the need to restructure American schools by empowering teachers to share decision making. The rationale was that decisions made closest to the locus of the implementation resulted in better classroom decisions (Bauer, 1997; Lashway, 1997; Short & Greer, 1997; Schmoker, 1996). Therefore, in order to improve education and to compete in the global race, most states enacted site-based management legislation (Hoyle, 1992). Hence, during this second wave of reform, site-based management, sometimes called school-based management surfaced as a buzzword in reform efforts.

Eight years, however, after the publication of *A Nation Prepared*, American students were still performing poorly in the global education race. Hence, the federal government again endeavored to improve student achievement by enacting the *American Goals 2000: Educate America Act* in 1994. This act attempted to standardize education with adherence to the following eight goals.

1. All children in America will start school ready to learn.
2. The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.
3. All students will leave grades 4, 6, and 12 having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, the arts, history, and geography, and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so that they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our nation's modern economy.
4. United States students will first in the world in mathematics and student achievement.

5. Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
  6. Every school in the United States will be free of drugs, violence, and the presence of firearms and alcohol and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.
  7. The nation's teaching force will have access to programs for the continual improvement of their professional skills and the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to instruct and prepare all American students for the next century.
  8. Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children.
- (Bushweller, 1999, pp. A6-A11)

In January 2001, President George W. Bush announced his framework for improving the nation's schools for all children, especially the neediest children being left behind. Called the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB Act), this framework seeks bipartisan solutions relative to accountability, choice, and flexibility in Federal education programs. To help ensure that no child is trapped in a failing school, parents of students attending Title I schools, for example, have the choice beginning with the 2002-2003 school year to enroll their children in another public or private school and to provide increased supplemental educational services. Therefore, already failing school districts will lose some of their funding because of the choice and supplemental service requirements if their low performance does not improve. On the other hand, an important goal of this act is to grant school districts greater flexibility in the use of Federal education funds in exchange for increased accountability for results. As a result of this flexibility, districts can now transfer up to 50 percent of the funding for Teacher Quality State

Grants, Educational Technology, Innovative Programs, and Safe and Drug-Free Schools to one of these programs or to Title I. Furthermore, the Reading First initiative of this act helps ensure that every child can read by third grade; thus, it has the potential to reduce the identification of children for special education because of a deficiency of reading skills in their early years. Table 1 presents a synthesis of research relative to the governance of American schools.

Table 1

Governance of American Schools

Descriptors	Carlson, 1996	Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986	Conway & Calz, 1996	Hansen, 1990	Murphy & Beck, 1995	The National Commission in Excellence in Education, 1983	Palestini, 1995	Sergiovanni, Burlingame, Combs, & Thurston, 1999	Sewell, 1999	Snauwert, 1993	Taylor & Levine, 1991	Goals 2000, 1994	No Child Left Behind, 2001
Decentralized one-room school with teacher and lay school board									•				
Rapid growth of schools requiring principals									•				
Centralization as a result of school consolidation and corruption requiring superintendents, principals, and staff of central office specialists	•	•						•	•	•			
Scientific management							•						
Early arguments for democratic decentralization			•		•						•		
Quality circles	•			•									
National crisis of mediocrity in American public schools						•						•	•
Empowerment of teachers	•					•							

## **SITE-BASED MANAGEMENT**

### **Definitions of Site-based Management**

Although ambiguity has surrounded the term, many researchers and educational practitioners have attempted to define site-based management. Oliver's study (1992) reported that the educational literature abounds with numerous attempts to provide precise meanings such as school-based management, building –based management, decentralized management, school-site autonomy, the autonomous school concept, responsible autonomy, school-based budgeting, school-site lump-sum budgeting, school improvement process, school-based curriculum development, teacher empowerment, shared governance, administrative decentralization, and shared decision making. Ponder (1997) also noted the different labels for concept and practice of employee involvement in education: site-based management, site-based decision making, and participative decision making.

Still others have attempted to provide precise definitions to capture the elusive nature of site-based management. Levey and Acker-Jocevar (1998) defined it as a delegation of authority, a shared decision-making model, and facilitative leadership at the school site. Similarly, Lindelow and Hynderick (1989) described site-based management as “a system of administration in which the school is the primary unit of educational decision making” (p.1). Herman (1993) defined site-based management as a structure or process of decentralizing school site decisions in some or all areas of budget, curriculum, instruction, staffing, policy, and other matters of governance; and a process of involving stakeholders in making decisions for the individual school site. Vincent and Johnson (2000) also stressed that SBM is a “way to structure relationships between districts and school sites in a manner that places much more accountability in the schools” (p. 1).

**In her synthesis of research on site-based management during the second wave of educational reform, David (1989) cited the following definition:**

**Under school-based management, professional responsibility replaces bureaucratic regulation; districts increase school autonomy in exchange for the staff's assuming responsibility for results ... it represents a change in how the district operates – how authority and responsibility are shared between the district and its schools. (p. 46)**

**However, in a more recent article on SBM. David (1996) defined SBM as “basically an attempt to transform schools into communities where the appropriate people participate constructively in major decisions that affect them” (p. 1).**

**The Education Commission of the States (2002) added a more comprehensive definition to the literature:**

**In the realm of public education, site-based management (SBM) is one form of decentralization that devolves budgetary, instructional and/or other decision making authority from centralized school administrations to individual schools. The rationale behind SBM is that those closest to the student are most capable of making important decisions that will lead to change and improvement. Creating school autonomy and empowering principal, school administrators, parents and other community members through participatory decision making are central themes of site-based management. (p. 1)**

**The Florida Department of Education (1996) described site-based management as a strategy that has facilitated improvements in education by transferring significant decision-making authority from state and central offices to individual schools. Thus, the school has become the primary decision-making unit. In some Florida districts, principals have delegated**

almost all authority to the teachers, but the superintendent and the school board maintain all authority. However, with SBM, the schools and community members have assumed responsibilities for decisions relative to school budgeting, staffing and dismissing personnel, and developing curricula. Involving principals, teachers, students, parents, and other community members, SBM has created a more positive learning environment for students. Table 2 presents a synthesis of definitions of SBM.

Table 2

**Definitions Related to Site-based Management**

<b>Key Elements</b>	<b>David, 1989</b>	<b>David, 1996</b>	<b>Education Commission of the States, 2002</b>	<b>Florida Department of Education, 1996</b>	<b>Levy and Acker-Joevar, 1998</b>	<b>Lindelow and Hynderick, 1991</b>	<b>Oliver, 1992</b>	<b>Ponder, 1997</b>	<b>Vincent &amp; Johnson, 2000</b>
Is a form of district organization	•						•		
Alters the governance of education		•						•	•
Represents a shift of authority toward decentralization				•	•				
Focuses on the school as the primary unit of educational change	•	•	•	•		•			
Delegates increased decision-making to the school site					•		•	•	•

**Characteristics of Site-based Management**

Even though site-based management programs vary from one building to another, researchers (e.g., David, 1996; Lashway, 1996; Odden & Wohlsetter, 1995; Wohlsetter, Kirk, Robertson, and Mohrman, 1997) found common characteristics among schools that implemented



site-based management programs. The following sections will overview autonomy, shared decision making, and teacher empowerment.

**Autonomy.** Considered the backbone of site-based management, school autonomy or the delegation of authority from central office to individual schools is a one critical characteristic. The review literature revealed that schools operate under varying degrees of autonomy stemming from a state regulatory framework empowering school districts to delegate autonomy to the school level. To increase district and school autonomy, states typically utilize three strategies that regulate restrictions on autonomy: (1) freeing schools from state rules and regulations; (2) enhancing flexibility to schools to improve student achievement by reducing some state rules and regulations; and (3) granting districts and schools waiver options and exemptions (Carnoy & MacDonell, 1990).

School districts usually delegate autonomy in the areas of budget priorities, staffing next, and then curriculum (Taylor, 1992). Herman and Herman (1994) also noted that school districts that allowed SBM on a voluntary basis delegated formal authority to sites in the three essential areas of budget, instruction, personnel, and governance. Having consulted with departments or teams, the principal submitted budget initiatives to central office for each fiscal year. Upon notification of the school's categorical funding, the principal, in turn, allocated funding for materials, supplies, projects, and staff development. He or she also encouraged teachers to develop curricula, to evaluate and select instructional materials, and to plan in-service training appropriate to meet the needs of their students (Herman, 1997). Furthermore, principals defined positions that needed to be filled, interviewed perspective staff, and recommended applicants for employment.

With this new shift in autonomy, the principal's role evolved from direct leadership to orchestration of decision making by others. Effective principals in site-based management schools assembled site councils or quality circles that involved every teacher as well as community members (Reed, 2000; Wohlsetter, Kirk, Robertson, & Mohrman, 1997). Although the principal clearly delineated the tasks and specified timelines and constraints, the site councils or quality circles developed their own initiatives.

According to Cawelti (1989), autonomy is an experiment in accountability. With increased autonomy and responsibility at the school site, states expect local stakeholders to improve student achievement and staff productivity. Cawelti (1989) cited the following components of SBM that focus these accountability efforts: various degrees of site-based budgeting affording alternate use of resources; a team operation to expand the basis of decision making; site advisory committees; increased authority for personnel selection; curriculum modification options; regulatory waiver options; and the expectation of an annual report on progress and school improvement. Additionally, Sykes (1999) noted other dimensions of devolution included "information, rewards, knowledge and skill, and extent of participation" (p. 241- 242).

**Shared Decision Making.** In addition to school autonomy, site-based management schools cited shared decision making as a second common characteristic. Schlechty (1997) characterized the types of decisions expected at the school level:

1. Better decisions;
2. Decisions more responsive to the needs and perceptions of parents;
3. Decisions more informed by the insights of teachers;

4. Decisions to which school faculties are more committed because they have had a direct hand in making the decisions (p. 115).

Proponents of shared decision making have discussed the importance of shared decision making. Hill and Bonan (1991) defined the term as follows:

Shared decision making ... represents a shift in the balance in an individual school, from control of all important issues by the principal to some degree of open discussion with the staff. Under shared decision making, all decisions are to be made by one vote or consensus. (p. 4)

Hill and Bonan further asserted that site-based management does not necessarily imply shared decision making and that principal may act sometimes without sharing power. On the other hand, they emphasized that site-based management and shared decision are often interrelated because both are based on two assumptions: "people closest to students are the ones most likely to make good decisions and adults in a school will perform best if they perceive themselves able to make judgments about students and accountable to parents for results" (p. 4).

Like Hill and Bonan, David (1996) and Lashway (1997) concurred that the rationale for shared decision making rests on the assumption that those closest to the students are the ones who should address the needs of the school and students. Lashway further explained that this approach focuses on a process rather than a product. Cheng (1996) advocated shared decision making for four reasons:

1. The goal of the school is often unclear and changeable. The participation of teachers, parents, students, and even alumni can help to develop goals which will be more able to reflect the present situation and future needs;

2. **The goals of a school are multiple and the mission of a school is complicated; they need the intelligence, imagination and effort of more people to accomplish. The participation or involvement of teachers, parents and students in decision making is an important contribution to the school;**
3. **Participation in decision making provides opportunities for members and even administrators to learn and develop, and also to understand and manage the school;**
4. **Participation in decision making is the process for encouraging teachers and parents and students to be involved in the school. (p. 54)**

**Even though shared decision making emerged in the early 1990's, the research in the mid-1990's generally did not reveal positive feelings among teachers (Liontos & Lashway, 1997). In the early stages of shared decision making, issues other than classroom instruction may have consumed teachers' attention, taking their time away from improving instruction (Peterson, Marks, & Warren, 1996). In addition, sometimes principals confused their roles and became more authoritative than facilitative and took charge of tasks assigned to teachers. When this role confusion occurred, shared decision became a catchy phrase to teachers rather than an approach to involve them in making decisions (Liontos & Lashway, 1997).**

**Although school-based management can occur without shared decision making, this type of decision making leads to a more professional school environment and a more professional teaching profession (David, 1996; Noble, Deemer, & Davis, 1996). These researchers suggested that participants implement decisions made from a group process more successfully, resulting in more ownership. In this case, principals often retained their authority but committed themselves to govern through consensus (Liontos & Lashway, 1997). To facilitate a positive climate, shared decision making developed a new form of leadership and enhanced the process of renewal,**

inquiry, and change (Combs, Miser, Whitaker, 1999; Lambert, 1998). Bailey (1991) suggested that “the key to organizational effectiveness is decision making. Not only is it important to make the right decisions, it is important to the overall climate as to who makes the decisions” (p. 56).

Huddleston, Claspell, and Killion (1991) recommended that a move toward decision making be accomplished in four phases: (1) readiness, (2) experimentation, (3) refinement through trial and error, and (4) institutionalization of the process. The readiness phase begins with the administrator’s belief that the staff can make effective decisions. Therefore, the administrator prepares a plan to integrate the staff as a team. During the next phase, which is a slow and continuous process, the administrator builds commitment, communication, and trust with the staff. Phrase three is a trial-and-error time and refinement of the decision making process. Phrase four occurs when there is a total institutionalization of participative decision-making teams. Furthermore, Huddleston, Claspell, and Killion commented on the need to clarify the parameters of the process and the need to understand the following: how decisions will be shared, what groups of people will be involved at each stage in the process, what time limits will be set for reaching decisions, how decisions will be made (i.e., majority vote, consensus), and who will be responsible for carrying out the decision.

**Teacher Empowerment.** Despite the variability of site-based management schools, teacher empowerment has emerged as a necessary component. *A Nation Prepared* (1988) sought to remove the restraints on teachers by recommending schools empower them to exercise professional judgment to attain goals, including making decisions about instructional materials and methods, staffing, student assignment and scheduling, and allocation of resources. In reference to shifting the locus of control to the teacher who is at the delivery level of instruction, Glickman (1990) defined teacher empowerment as the theory that, “when given collective

responsibility to make educational decisions in an information-rich environment, educators will work harder and smarter on the behalf of their clients: students and parents” (p. 69). Moses and Whitaker (1990) also embraced teacher empowerment. From their viewpoint, a teacher’s role “requires a redefinition from the sustain job of dispensing information to the more sophisticated one facilitating [student] growth “ (p. 33).

Although early definitions addressed teacher empowerment as an attribute of professionalism by referring to increased decision-making autonomy and accountability at the school site, more contemporary views focused on relationships among teacher empowerment, school organization, and teaching and learning (Mark & Louis, 1997; Newman & Associates, 1996). Affiliated with a large-scale study conducted by the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools (CORS), Mark and Louis (1997) found a positive relationship between teacher empowerment and student achievement through connections of school organization and quality pedagogy. Their results suggested that teacher empowerment is an essential but not a sufficient condition alone to improve instructional practices impacting student achievement. Further, they concluded that four domains of teacher empowerment impacted instructional practices, depending on the teacher’s influence in the domain: (1) school operations and management, (2) students’ school experiences, (3) teachers’ work life, and (4) classroom instruction. Exerting influence in these domains benefited teachers when there was an emphasis on teaching and learning school-wide. Therefore, these researchers concluded that teacher empowerment affects instructional practices and student achievement indirectly through school organization for instruction and learning.

Short and Greer (1997) commented on a leader’s strengthening his or her power by empowering others. According to them, empowerment is a policy of inclusion that fosters a

leader's expanding his or her power by involving others in the decision-making process. Typically, this approach included elements, such as decision making, autonomy over issues relative to quality of work life, and acquisition of information and knowledge needed to make informed decisions. To achieve educational goals, the school "must change in many ways to support the informed and skilled application of this power, and to provide incentives for people to make fundamental changes in how they enact their roles" (p. 2). In addition, current research has shown that empowering teachers has led to increased student achievement (Holloway, 2000; Short & Greer, 1997; Wohlsetter et al., 1997), higher teacher morale and motivation (Whitaker, Whitaker, & Lumpa, 2000), and heightened job satisfaction and productivity (Richardson, Lane, & Flanigan, 1995), and greater commitment to achieve school goals (Reed, 2000). Table 3 presents a synthesis of the research on characteristics of site-based management.

**Table 3**

**Characteristics Related to Site-based Management**

Authors	Autonomy	Shared Decision Making	Teacher Empowerment
<b>A Nation Prepared, 1988</b>		•	•
<b>Carter &amp; Cunningham, 1997</b>	•	•	
<b>Cawelti, 1989</b>	•	•	
<b>Cheng, 1996</b>		•	
<b>Combs, Miser, &amp; Whitaker, 1999</b>		•	
<b>David, 1996</b>		•	
<b>Glickman, 1990</b>		•	•
<b>Hess, 1999</b>		•	
<b>Hill &amp; Bonan, 1991</b>		•	
<b>Holloway, 2000</b>		•	
<b>Lambert, 1998</b>		•	
<b>Lashway, 1997</b>		•	
<b>Lee &amp; Smith, 2001</b>		•	
<b>Liontos, 1997</b>		•	
<b>Liontos &amp; Lashway, 1997</b>		•	
<b>Mark &amp; Louis, 1997</b>			•
<b>Moses &amp; Whitaker, 1990</b>			•
<b>Noble, Deemer, &amp; Davis, 1996</b>		•	
<b>Odden &amp; Wohlsetter, 1995</b>			
<b>Peterson, Marks, &amp; Warren, 1996</b>		•	
<b>Reed, 2000</b>	•		
<b>Richardson, Lane, &amp; Flanigan, 1995</b>			•
<b>Schlechy, 1997</b>		•	•
<b>Sykes, 1999</b>	•		
<b>Vincent &amp; Johnson, 2000</b>		•	
<b>Whitaker, Whitaker, &amp; Lumpa, 2000</b>			•
<b>Wohlsetter, Kirk, Robertson, &amp; Mohrman, 1997</b>	•		

**Advantages of Site-based Management**

Advocates of site-based management noted several benefits that schools reaped. It allowed principals, teachers, and parents to exert substantial influence in the domains of budget, personnel, and curriculum at the school level. Furthermore, it enhanced employees' morale and motivation because of their increased involvement in making decisions about their increased involvement in making decisions about their work. Site-based management also enhanced the



quality of the planning process by capitalizing on the expertise of participants and the benefits of group interaction. Besides, this type of management permitted teachers to engender instructional improvements since participants had the autonomy to create innovative programs that they implemented because of their acquired ownership. In addition, advocates asserted that SBM should involve community members, taking advantage of their expertise and fostering opportunities to share ownership and responsibility for local decisions (Strum, 1996). Even though proponents conceded that the direct relationship between a site-based management program and increased student achievement is unclear, they attributed higher achievement to this program (David, 1996).

In addition, a joint task force representing the American Association of School Administrators, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, and the National Association of Secondary School Principals identified nine advantages of SBM:

1. Formally recognizes the expertise and competence of individuals at the school site to make instructional decisions;
2. Affords teachers and other staff members, parents, and community stakeholders more opportunities for increased input from the school level;
3. Improves teacher morale;
4. Directly involves teachers in determining their staff development needs;
5. Focuses accountability for decisions;
6. Aligns financial and instructional resources with instructional goals;
7. Provides better student programs and services;
8. Increases leadership at all levels; and
9. Improves communication (AASA, 1988).

Table 4 presents a synthesis of research on advantages of SBM.

Table 4

**Advantages of Site-based Management**

<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Strum, 1996</b>	<b>David, 1996</b>	<b>AASA, 1988</b>
Enhances teacher morale and motivation	•		•
Capitalizes on expert of site participants	•	•	•
Engenders instructional improvement	•		•
Fosters accountability for decision making	•	•	•
Aligns financial and instructional resources with instructional goals	•	•	•
Provides opportunities to involve stakeholders	•	•	•
Addresses focused staff development	•		•
Builds leadership capacity	•		•
Yields higher student achievement		•	

**Disadvantages of Site-based Management**

Although site-based management is a popular reform strategy, several factors may potentially thwart successful implementation of this strategy. According to Wohlsetter, Kirk, Robertson, and Mohrman (1997), site-based management is doomed to fail if it is adopted as a stand-alone strategy. Instead, school officials should give careful consideration to implementing this governance structure as a catalyst to reform teaching practices and to enhance learning via school level decision making. Other researchers (Lashway, 1997; Drury, 1999) also noted that the provision of adequate time is a major disadvantage. For instance, working on school improvement committees requires an inordinate amount of time. Sometimes, this lack of time

leads to stress because teachers sometimes feel as though they need more time planning their individual lessons and attending to the needs of their individual students.

In addition to lack of adequate time needed for decision making, role ambiguity can affect the success of site-based management. Under site-based management, the principal must often change roles from being the sole authority to serving as a facilitator of decision making. For autocratic principals, role strain results when they fear relinquishing control or losing their identities. This strain can lead to a power struggle among the principal and teachers, stifling teachers' sense of ownership for decisions and causing site-based management to be less effective (Clemons, 2000; Sykes, 1999; Wohlsetter et al).

Another disadvantage in some site-based schools is the risk of making less specialized decisions at the school site. Instead of the central office specialist making informed decisions, teachers without sufficient requisite knowledge, experience, and information are asked to make decisions. In such situations, teachers experience frustration because of their lack of training and data to make informed decisions. Therefore, there is an increased need for staff development (Clemons, 2000; Lashway, 1997)). Table 5 presents a synthesis of the research related to disadvantages of site-based management.

Table 5

**Disadvantages of Site-based Management**

<b>Disadvantages</b>	<b>Clemons, 2000</b>	<b>Drury, 1999</b>	<b>Lashway, 1997</b>	<b>Sykes, 1999</b>	<b>Wohlsetter, 1997</b>
SBM as a stand-alone strategy					•
Inadequate time	•			•	•
Role Ambiguity	•	•	•		

## **SITE-BASED MANAGEMENT AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

Focusing on job satisfaction, early research on SBM noted some promising findings but concluded that the effects of SBM on school improvement are problematic, unless this initiative is well-designed and well-implemented. However, more recently, researchers have concluded that SBM leads to school improvement, particularly in school culture, instructional practices, and student achievement. Wohlsetter, Kirk, Robertson, and Mohrman (1997) helped design a comprehensive School-Based Management Project, collaborating with researchers encompassing other disciplines on organizational, political, and economic issues paramount to restructuring education in high performance schools. The goal of the project was to determine how SBM, combined with curriculum and instruction reform, improves the performance of a school. The 40 selected schools had utilized SBM for at three years. The researchers interviewed over 400 participants ranging from superintendents to principals and teachers to parents and students and collected archival data and survey data.

### **Shared Vision, Mission, and Goals**

Researchers concluded that a shared vision, mission, and goals contributed to the success of schools (Hannay & Ross, 1997; Merz & Furman, 1997). Wohlsetter et al. found that actively restructuring schools connected curriculum and instruction with an instructional mechanism, which may be state standards, curriculum frameworks, and an accountability assessment system. According to them, a well-defined vision coordinated with an instructional mechanism provided a focus and direction to drive decisions about teaching and learning. For instance, based on their school's needs, teachers sometimes wrote more specified curricular frameworks. Moreover, the vision and instructional mechanism served as a focus for reform activities and for site councils (David, 1996; Guskey & Peterson, 1996). Additionally, in reference to the Memphis City

**Schools, Schlechty enumerated seven goals of SBM which schools can employ to develop their specific goals:**

- 1. To focus on school improvement;**
- 2. To help develop ownership in the school;**
- 3. To help parents feel their contributions are worthwhile by involving them in significant decisions about school improvement;**
- 4. To involve the broader community, particularly business/corporate members in supporting the school;**
- 5. To improve the marketing of the school's program by increasing the number of persons who are knowledgeable about the school;**
- 6. To demonstrate that participatory decision-making can work effectively; and**
- 7. To improve the quality of decisions made with regard to school improvement issues (pp. 254-246).**

**Thus, actively restructuring schools improved because they focused on an articulated vision of their mission, values, and goals pertaining to district and school goals pertaining also to student outcomes while struggling schools could not reach a consensus to link their vision with state, school, and district standards.**

### **Professional Communities**

**Recent research further reported that successful schools widely dispersed power throughout the school by involving a variety of stakeholders in an array of decision-making teams, including community members (Cawelti, 1997). Lee and Smith (1996) supported the finding that "schools with high levels of collective responsibility for learning are those where students learn more in all subjects" (p. 127). These schools also configured teacher-led teams**

by grade level and subject area to facilitate building a school community, as well as included teachers on council subcommittees. In addition, work teams, spanning all grade levels, addressed subject area or school goals, such as technology and professional development, curriculum, and assessment. Formally focusing their attention and energies on these specific tasks that were meaningful to the school, work teams garnered successful innovations and shared more ownership of decisions school-wide. Because the configuration of teams spanned across grade levels and subject areas, entire faculty was more aware of the needs of their schools and interacted with each other as they collaborated to improve their schools. Participating in deriving solutions for curricular and instructional problems not only developed collegiality among them but also fortified the strength of the professional community to enhance instructional goals of schools (Newmann, 1997; Mark & Louis, 1997). As a result of teachers assuming an active role in a professional community, their schools improved (Fiore, 2001; Lee and Smith, 2001).

In successful SBM schools, site councils served mainly to coordinate and integrate the activities of the decision-making groups throughout the school. Specifically, councils supported the changes for school improvement and allocated resources, focusing on the vision of the school rather than the needs of individual departments or teaching teams. For instance, successful SBM schools reallocated time for teachers to use resource teachers and to provide a common planning period. On the other hand, struggling schools tended to disperse more power to the site council, usually comprised of selected committed teachers who often became exhausted and burn-out because of excessive demands on their time (Wohlsetter et al). McCloskey, Minkow-Porto, and Bingham (1998) found that oftentimes site councils had little or no training on how to design and implement a school-improvement plan. Furthermore, councils did not understand their roles and

rarely addressed curricular and instructional issues. Moreover, there were power relationships over who should make decisions, eventually leading to strong feelings of resentment among other decision-making groups and unfocused reform efforts.

### **Focused Approach to Staff Development**

In addition, research has found that successful schools placed a very high priority on professional development that aligned with school's reform agenda, especially in developing knowledge in teaching, learning, curriculum, and assessment (Lee & Smith, 2001; Reed, 2001; Wohlsetter et al). On-going professional activities oriented toward building a school-wide capacity for change, created a community of professionals who collaborated with each other to achieve school goals, and developed a shared knowledge. Offering opportunities for faculty and staff members, office staff, support staff, site council members, and students, these schools also provided training in interpersonal skills, such as decision-making, consensus-building, and conflict resolution, and in leadership skills – running a meeting, budgeting, and interviewing. Throughout their work with schools, Hopkins, West, and Ainscow (1996) also promoted a systematic and integrated approach to staff development needs, concluding that teacher development is center to student learning and school improvement. Because there was not a school-wide consensus for the needs of staff development, struggling SBM schools offered professional development on a case-by-case basis. Moreover, attendance at staff development activities was not required, resulting sometimes in teacher absentees.

### **Broad Dissemination of Information**

Successful schools also developed multiple channels to collect information related to school priorities related to teaching and learning and disseminated information to internal and external stakeholders (David, 1996; Wohlsetter et al). These schools collected a plethora of data

on student performance – test scores, grade distributions, daily attendance, and tardy rates—and often disseminated them to parents. Moreover, they collected fiscal data and data from parent and community satisfaction surveys about school performance and used the results to plan for the upcoming year. Further, work teams not only collected information about innovative approaches in their schools to improve teaching and learning but also compared benchmark data with the performance of other schools. Johnson (1997/2000) observed that “effective educators make effective decisions, decisions based on accurate information. If knowledge is power, then studying the current abilities, skills, attitudes, and learning styles of students empowers educators to adjust the curriculum” to attain specified school and division goals” (p. 1).

Additionally, Carter and Cunningham (1997) stressed the importance of knowledge of information:

1. Knowledge of the organization;
2. Information about student performance and comparisons with other schools;
3. Information about whether parents and community leaders are satisfied with the schools and the resources available (p. 80).

In contrast, struggling schools did not expend sufficient time creating networks of information and often were distrustful of input from parents and the community.

### **Recognition**

Actively restructuring schools acknowledged individuals and groups for the extra effort toward improving teaching and learning practices, as well as recognizing school improvements. However, a monetary reward system was not the norm. Instead, non-monetary recognition included thank-you notes from the principals, recognition at faculty meetings, appreciation meals sponsored by the parent-teacher association, plaques, and parties celebrating milestones of



success. Nevertheless, the intrinsic motivation created by collaborating and learning with other colleagues was not sufficient to maintain a substantial level of teacher involvement. Therefore, when schools gave monetary rewards, they generally provided compensation for teachers assuming extra administrative duties and grants to reimburse teachers for time beyond the school day (Guskey & Peterson, 1996; Wohlsetter et al, 1997). Unfortunately, in unsuccessful schools, acknowledging individual and group efforts toward achieving school goals was difficult. Because of the lack of a shared vision, the faculty often could not decipher who should receive recognition. Furthermore, the faculty was unaware of each other's accomplishments.

### **Effective Facilitative SBM Principals**

Additionally, research findings indicated that successful schools have effective principals. Delaney (1997) concluded that the most important factors impacting the success between SBM and significant school improvement is the principal's leadership style. In his survey, the teachers responded that the principal has to be "strong, capable, and a dedicated leader" (p. 108). Wohlsetter et al described effective SBM principals as often spearheading the development of the school mission but delegating tasks to subcommittees. Usually, the principal's role was empowering, promoting a school-wide commitment to school goals, involving teachers in school improvement, and collecting data about student achievement, and distributing rewards. While the principal worked to promote a school organization and climate, teachers also assumed leadership in areas directly related to teaching and learning – curriculum, professional development, and instructional practices. Moreover, the principal supported the teachers' efforts by providing resources and removing any barriers. In contrast, unsuccessful principals' leadership styles were either too autocratic or laissez fair. In either case, they did not move the school in a meaningful direction (Newmann; Wohlsetter et al).

In her discussion, Harris (1997) enumerated six characteristics that enabled principals to implement SBM effectively. As a “definer of the vision,” the principal must possess an understanding of the organization and its operation in order to communicate a shared vision to teachers and other stakeholders. Another characteristic is the principal as a “decision maker,” delegating decision-making authority to teachers and fostering a sense of ownership in the school by involving them in critical decisions for the betterment of the school. A third characteristic is the principal a “creator of climate, who establishes a positive school climate by encouraging others to take risks to implement new student programs such as mentoring and peer tutoring. In the role of “curriculum and instructional leader,” the principal must procure an understanding of current trends in education and utilize staff development to introduce techniques that will benefit students. As a willing “initiator of action,” the principal focuses energy on receiving action from the staff by seeking their input on matters important to the school and by holding staff accountable for high expectations. As an “advocate for an equitable learning environment,” the principal must examine and implement programs beneficial to the diverse populations in schools today.

On a similar note, Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999) suggested four categories necessary for facilitative leadership in the twenty-first century:

1. Setting directions (includes vision building, goal consensus and development of high-performance expectations);
2. Developing people (includes the provision of individualized support, intellectual stimulation and the modeling of values and practices important to the mission of the school);

3. **Organizing (culture building in which colleagues are motivated by moral imperatives and structuring, fostering shared decision-making processes and problem-solving capacities); and**
4. **Building relationships with the school community. (p. 39)**

School reformers and researchers have also reported that successful principals garnered resources by joining national networks or networks affiliated with various reform models like the Coalition of Essential Schools (New American Schools, 1998; Wohlsetter et al). Moreover, some principals served on boards of community organizations, such as business groups or attended their meetings. Schools also sought the assistance of universities for professional development and private foundations for financial assistance. However, struggling schools did not actively seek support for outside resources.

#### **Organizational Considerations**

According to Newmann (1997), school improvement policies focus on a number of qualities, which directly or indirectly affect student achievement: educational process (learning processes and environments), course content, school climate, staffing, and school organization. After reviewing approaches to improve school performance, Joyce (1991) summarized five major emphases to school improvement:

1. ***Collegiality*: developing cohesive and professional relations with school faculties and connecting them more closely to their surrounding neighborhoods;**
2. ***Research*: helping school faculties study research about effective school practices or instructional alternatives;**
3. ***Site-specific information*: helping faculties collect and analyze data about their schools and their students' progress;**

4. ***Curriculum initiatives:*** introducing changes within subject areas or, as in the case of the computer, across the curriculum areas;
5. ***Instructional strategies:*** organizing teachers to study teaching skills and strategies. (p. 59)

Purkey and Smith (1985) viewed the culture of the school as a key component of school improvement: They asserted the following argument:

We have argued that an academically effective school is distinguished by its culture, a process, and climate of values and norms that channel staff and students in the direction of successful teaching and learning .... The logic of the cultural model is such that it points to increasing the organizational effectiveness of a school building and is neither grade level nor curriculum specific (p. 68).

Likewise, Hannay and Ross (1997) espoused the belief that schools will improve by nurturing and building on twelve cultural norms:

1. Collegiality;
2. Experimentation;
3. High expectations;
4. Trust and confidence;
5. Tangible support
6. Reaching out to the knowledge base;
7. Appreciation and recognition;
8. Caring, celebration, and humor;
9. Involvement in decision making;
10. Protection of what's important;

11. Traditions;

12. Honest, open communication

Table 6 presents a synthesis of the findings on SBM and school improvement.

Table 6

Site-based Management Related to School Improvement

Descriptors	David, 1996	Delaney, 1997	Cawelti, 1997	ECS, 2002	Guskey & Peterson, 1996	Hannay & Ross, 1997	Harris, 1997	Lee & Smith, 1996	Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1998	Mertz and Furman, 1997	McCloskey, Minkow, Porto, & Bingham, 1999	Newmann, 1997
Shared Vision, Mission, and Goals	•			•	•	•				•		•
Professional Communities			•					•			•	•
Focused Approach to Staff Development	•		•		•			•				
Broad Dissemination of Information	•		•		•			•				
Successful Facilitative SBM Principals			•		•		•		•			•

SITE-BASED MANAGEMENT AND STUDENT SUCCESS

Curriculum and Instructional Considerations

Despite its variations, researchers asserted that the primary goal of SBM should be to improve student performance (David, 1996; Gleason, Donohue, & Leader, 1996; Holloway, 2000; Lee & Smith, 2001; Reed, 2000; Vincent & Johnson, 2000). Cotton (1992) noted that researchers have found a positive correlation between SBM and improved student outcomes in some schools and that this initiative is increasing its potential for improving student

performance. Furthermore, SBM motivates teachers to develop and implement instructional improvements for two reasons: (1) those building relationships with students and closest to the instructional level know the needs of students best and (2) site participants take more ownership of their decisions. As a result of positive relationships among students and teachers, students would increase their commitment to learning and expend more effort on school assignments and activities. Thus, students improve their performance (Lee & Smith, 2001). However, David concurred that schools often address other issues other than curriculum and instruction. However, they should focus attention curriculum and instruction issues regardless of whether other issues directly exert influence on curriculum and instruction. To maximize learning opportunities, schools should link non-instructional issues with other conditions.

Wohlsetter, Kirk, Robertson, and Mohrman (1997) asserted that classroom change must occur before student performance would increase. As they stated, "schools must develop new and different approaches to meet the more stringent educational requirements in a changing society to meet the needs of a changing population of students" (p. ix). From their study, they identified innovative classroom practices that resulted in improved achievement: teaching of understanding, use of technology, educating all students, and integrated services. The instructional practice, teaching for understanding, engages students in utilizing higher-order thinking skills, evidenced by students' problem solving and creativity. Moreover, to build interconnections and/or reinforce topics, teachers increased their use of interdisciplinary curricula and cooperative learning. Also, students' assessments incorporated more application of concepts and skills rather than a reproduction of knowledge-level material. In addition to teaching for understanding, these researchers observed students using technology for learning and producing. For example, students used computers in math, writing, and searching the

Internet for information. Furthermore, schools charted their mission of educating all students by individualizing instruction, scheduling non-graded classrooms, and mainstreaming special needs students. In the area of integrated services, teams of teachers took responsibility for the educational development of designated students. Schools also externally integrated services by developing links to the community and to other agencies for social and medical services.

Noble, Deemer, and Davis (1996) pointed out that “thinking in education has focused attention on improving the success of all students, with some proposing the use of the curriculum and instructional practices that emphasize student problem solving and higher-order thinking skills” (p. 1). They further noted that some studies have found positive effects on students result from SBM when their teachers participate in decisions relevant to instructional content, methods, and grade assignment. Additionally, they noted that involving students in the decision making process effectively decreased student misbehavior. For instance, schools studied in Dade County, Florida, reported a decrease in suspensions and dropout rates over a period of three years.

David (1996) commented on the increased difficulty regarding curriculum and instruction issues today. Because some states and districts mandate assessments that require teachers to use unfamiliar teaching methods, many educators have suffered severe consequences for their students’ lack of performance. In such cases, schools should provide a substantive curricular framework to guide instruction. Moreover, Davis suggested that schools afford staff development opportunities and make accessible resources and information schools need to enhance student achievement.

In a five-year study on changes in school structures and other organizational conditions that elevate student achievement, Newmann and Wehlage (1995) concluded that “school

restructuring can indeed improve student learning. But there is no ‘magic bullet’ or simple recipe for successful school restructuring” (p. 1). These researchers advised schools to focus on four key factors to boost student achievement: student learning, authentic pedagogy, school organizational capacity, and external support.

- **Student Learning** -- To enhance student learning, teachers must link the planning, implementation, and assessment of new approaches to a consensual vision of high quality intellectual work, and share clear goals for high quality learning to schools and parents. Furthermore, they must relate that vision of student learning to the core technology of schooling – including curriculum and instruction, assessment, staffing, scheduling options, professional development, and student counseling. More specifically, the “Authentic Student Achievement” vision has three components: construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry, value beyond school, and authentic pedagogy. Construction of knowledge, refers to students applying knowledge by organizing, interpreting, and analyzing information. Disciplined inquiry refers to the student expressing an in-depth understanding of established information in core courses by writing an essay, for example. Value beyond school refers to students producing work or solving problems that connect to the real world. In this way, students increase their retention rate (Newmann & Wehlage).
- **Authentic pedagogy** – Newmann and Wehlage also reported that teachers must be champions of the vision by combining instruction techniques with assessment tools. In this vein, a set of authentic pedagogy standards measure the extent to which students utilize higher-order thinking skills and link academic learning with the real world. Receiving more authentic pedagogy, students retain more.



- **Organizational capacity** – Newmann and Wehlage defined this component as the building the capacity of a staff to function as professional communities. As professional communities, the staff and students collaborate to achieve student learning goals. Moreover, teachers constantly take responsibility for student learning and improving instructional practices.
- **External support** – Schools are intermingled in a maze of expectations, regulations, and external stimuli. Schools need to avail themselves with external financial, technical, and political resources (Newmann & Wehlage).

### **Indicators of Student Success**

Although districts use standardized test scores to judge student performance, researchers and writers have advocated other indicators of student success. Vincent and Johnson indicated school districts must realize that SBM or any other initiative may not yield significant gains in test scores within a year. Instead, schools need to allow for time for planning, reflection, and refinement to develop a workable decision making system leading to improved student achievement. According to Chion-Kenney (1994), “school-based management is more than raising tests scores; it’s about modeling skills and attitudes we want our young people to bring to their jobs, their relationships, and other civic responsibilities’ (p. 72). Sometimes, schools need to collect evaluative “soft data: how people feel, care about, and express their attitudes about change, and how does this translate into new behaviors” (p. 72). Along this line of reasoning, Neal (1991) concluded that schools should survey parents, students, teachers, classified employees, principals, supervisors, and other administrators to “identify and quantify the changes in attitudes that resulted from their exposure to school-based management” (p. 162). Neal also suggested measure changes in student attendance, student suspensions, staff absenteeism, and teacher turnover. Besides using soft data, Neal suggested that a measure of

success should include a variety of standardized tests such as norm-referenced achievement tests, local school criterion-referenced tests, the scholastic aptitude test, advanced placement tests, and merit scholarship winners.

Reynolds (1997) posited site-based management would be judged in terms of its effect on students. Because site-based management is a decision-making strategy, its effect may not be direct. He further reasoned that schools should be beyond the point of determining the success of educational programs by using only standardized measures of student achievement. He suggested using a broader concept of student success that includes various ways to measure the effectiveness of school efforts. Explaining that the attainment of student success is dependent on the effective educational programs and needed services, he enumerated the following criteria for student success:

1. Higher-order thinking skills;
2. Multicultural understanding and appreciation;
3. Dropout rates;
4. Community service;
5. Access to elective;
6. Participation in upper-level math and science classes;
7. Post-secondary choice and success;
8. Student self-concept;
9. Creativity and excellence in the arts. (p. 7)

Mark and Louis (1997) commented on educators assuming collective responsibility for student success:

**Collective responsibility for student learning captures the shared conviction among a school's teachers that all students—despite disadvantage and past failure—can and will learn if given opportunity and support, where collective responsibility for student learning is strong, teachers respond to the challenge of instructing all students as a mutual endeavor marshaling their shared knowledge, wisdom, and commitment. (p. 251)**

**To improve student success, other researchers advocated improving the “feelings” or climate in a school. Kelly, Brown, Bulter, Glittens, Taylor, and Zeller (1998) reported a positive impact between climate and student achievement. When students feel as though they are valued as part of a school community, they often improve their academic performance and their behavior (Merz & Furman, 1997). In their study of successful high schools, Murphy, Beck, Crawford, Hodges, and McGaughy (2001) described the climate as “welcoming and inclusive of ... students” p. 162. This inclusive setting fosters students’ feeling as though they have membership in the school and encourages student involvement in the life or activities of the school. In such inclusive schools, adults exhibit pervasive caring for students and assume responsibility for nurturing students’ personal and academic growth. In addition, they indicated that this inclusive environment involved students in extracurricular activities, increased opportunities for peer interactions through shared experiences, schoolwork relevant to students’ lives, a sense of belonging, transition programs for their new students, and an appreciation for multicultural perspectives. Table 7 presents a synthesis of the research on SBM and student success.**

Table 7

## Site-based Management Related to Student Success

Descriptors	Chion-Kenney, 1994	David, 1996	Kelley, Brown, Glittens, Taylor, & Zeller, 1998	Lee & Smith, 2000	Marks & Louis, 1997	Merz & Furman, 1997	Murphy, Beck, Crawford, Hodges, 2001	Neal, 1991	Newmann & Wehlage, 1995	Noble, Deemer, & Davis, 1996	Reed, 2000	Reynolds, 1997	Vincent & Johnson, 2000	Wolhseter, Kirk, Robertson, and Mohrman, 1997
Charting the school mission						•								•
Building relationships with students				•							•			
Identifying innovative classroom practices		•							•		•			•
Building interconnections and/or reinforcing topics						•	•							•
Emphasizing problem solving										•	•			
Linking planning, implementation, and assessment				•					•		•			
Collecting "soft data"	•							•						
Using multiple indicators of success	•							•				•	•	
Focusing on curricula and instruction		•											•	•
Using technology									•					•
Assuming collective responsibility for student success				•	•	•						•		
Creating a positive school climate	•	•	•	•		•	•							
Developing professional communities				•		•		•			•			•

## **Summary**

This chapter discussed a historical context for the evolution of site-based management in American schools. Prior to the twentieth century, decentralization characterized the governance structure of the one-room schoolhouses in rural and the multi-schools in the urban areas. However, because of the effects of the Industrial Movement, the demographics changed, and the number of schools rapidly increased. To consolidate rural schools and to end corruption in urban schools, educators and reformers hired superintendents, then principals, and a staff of central office specialists to manage the daily operations of the school systems. Thus, centralization, subsequently fueled by scientific management and the Great Depression, rose to the forefront as the governance structure in the twentieth century. However, educational reformers protested this bureaucratic governance structure and touted democracy as a banner word to institutionalize decentralization so that those closest to the work problem could share in decision making. This belief reinforced the efforts of the teacher council movement, as well as spearheaded the use of quality circles in education and the launch of early attempts at SBM.

This chapter also discussed the impact of the landmark report, A Nation at Risk (1983), which characterized American schools as mediocre and ineffective. Garnering national attention, this report prompted more rigorous standards and more responsibility for teachers but gave teachers little autonomy. On the contrary, the performance of schools continued to decline.

With the publication of A Nation Prepared (1986), which recommended empowering teachers to share decision making, SBM surfaced as a buzzword during this second wave of reform. However, eight years after this publication, a crisis of mediocrity continued to plague American schools. To help ensure a quality education for American students, the federal

government enacted American Goals 2000 to standardize education. In 2001, President Bush enacted the *No Child Left Behind Act* to ensure a quality education for all children.

In addition to providing a range of emerging and most recent definitions, this review also focused on three common characteristics of SBM: (1) autonomy, (2) shared decision making, and teacher empowerment. Furthermore, this study explored the advantages of SBM, such as utilizing the expertise of site participants, increasing student performance, improving teacher morale, providing opportunities for leadership at all levels, allowing stakeholders more opportunities for input, and sharing ownership and responsibility. Additionally, this review discussed disadvantages of SBM, including SBM as a stand-alone strategy, inadequate time for teachers to share in decision making, role ambiguity, and lack of requisite knowledge, experience, and data needed to make some decisions.

In the eighties and mid-twentieth century, earlier research noted promising findings but concluded that the effects of SBM on school improvement and student success are problematic. During this time, schools rarely utilized SBM to address student goals and/or implemented this structure as a stand-alone reform strategy. On the other hand, this review depicted SBM as a well-designed, embedded strategy leading to school improvement and student success, for example, if schools consider the following areas: (1) consensus on the school's vision, mission, and goals, (2) curricular, instructional, and professional development practices aligned with the vision, mission, and goals, (3) school culture, (4) facilitative or enabling leadership, and (5) collective responsibility for school improvement and student success. Moreover, although standardized test scores have entrenched themselves as harbingers of student success, the review literature suggested including broader indicators of student success to measure the effectiveness

**of school efforts, for instance, achievement, passing rates, use of technology, student discipline, and dropout rates.**

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

**The purpose of this single site case study was to examine administrators', teachers', and guidance counselors' perceptions of site-based management components and school improvement. Specially, this research addressed the following questions:**

- 1. What are the perceptions of experienced teachers toward key aspects of site-based management (shared decision making, school climate, and student success)?**
- 2. What factors do experienced educators identify with promoting the successful implementation of site-based management components (shared decision making, school climate, and student success)?**
- 3. What factors do experienced educators identify with hindering the successful implementation of site-based management components (shared decision making, school climate, and student success)?**

**The study employed both quantitative and qualitative methodology. Miles and Huberman (cited in Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 37) noted that “qualitative data can be used to supplement, validate, explain, illuminate, or reinterpret quantitative, or reinterpret quantitative data gathered from the same subjects or site. In this manner, this mixed design utilized a survey to collect quantitative data, as well as gather qualitative data by interviewing a focus group of one administrator, teachers, and guidance counselors. The following discussion presents the qualitative design and then the quantitative design.**



## **Research Design**

### **Case Study Methodology**

Because of the proliferation of textbooks, handbooks, how-to-guides, and courses on qualitative research, case study research methodology has evolved as a widely acceptable qualitative inquiry. By clarifying the nature of qualitative research, some leading authorities have grounded it as a credible approach in its own right. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) offered the following comprehensive definition for this methodology:

Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials -- case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts -- that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals' lives. (p. 2)

This definition characterized qualitative research as being interpretive and naturalistic. Additionally, it specified multiple sources of information and approaches for describing the research. Likewise, Creswell (1998) conveyed the ideas of interpretive and naturalistic approaches in his definition:

Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. (p. 15)

Stating that qualitative research varies from one user to another, Bogdan and Biklen (1998) associated different phrases with qualitative research, including "...symbol interactionist, inner perspective, the Chicago School, phenomenological, case study, ethnomethodological, ecological, and descriptive " (p. 3). Similarly, Glesne and Peshkin (1998) stated that "qualitative inquiry is an umbrella term for various philosophical orientations to interpretative research. For example, qualitative researchers might call their work ethnography, case study, phenomenology, educational criticism, or several other terms" (p. 9). On the topic of developing a focus for the collected data, these authorities substantiated the naturalistic characteristic of qualitative inquiry:

While people conducting qualitative research may develop a focus as they collect data, they do not approach the research with specific questions to answer or hypotheses to test. They also are concerned with understanding behavior from the subject' own frame of reference. External causes are of secondary importance. They tend to collect their data through sustained contact with people in settings where subjects normally spend their time – classrooms, cafeterias, teacher's lounges, dormitories, street corners. (p. 2)

Because the case study approach fits within the context if qualitative research discussed above, this study utilized the case study approach as a natural, interpretive approach.

#### Rationale for Using Qualitative Case Study Methodology

Leading authorities have suggested the use of the case study for certain investigations. Noting the characteristics of a case study, Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) observed that it focuses "on the study of specific instances, that is *cases*, of a phenomenon" (p. 543). In other words, a case study sheds light on a phenomenon and "a case is a particular instance of the phenomenon" (p.545). They further stated that many qualitative researchers subscribe to this approach for their investigations. Moreover, according to them, the researcher can investigate any phenomena

utilizing a case study, without having to adhere to a formal methodology. Stake (1995) also indicated that as a form of research, case study is defined by interest in individual cases, not by the method of inquiry used. Moreover, they explained that “ research questions are not framed by operationalizing variables; rather, they are formulated to investigate topics in all their complexity, in context” (p. 2). Similarly, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) noted that qualitative research, to include case study research, places “an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured (if measured at all) in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency” (p. 8). As mentioned earlier, Bogdan and Biklen (1998) defined qualitative research as an umbrella term for multiple research that share strategies that share common characteristics. Differentiating qualitative research, they indicated that the data collected are termed *soft*, providing rich descriptions of people, places, and dialogues which quantitative procedures may experience difficulty capturing.

In addition, the case study approach allows the researcher needs to explore the topic under these conditions: (a) difficulty identifying variables, (b) lack of available theories explaining the behavior of the participants or their population, and (c) need to develop theories. Moreover, this qualitative inquiry accommodates the need to present a detailed view of the topic. In a case study, “research questions start with a *how or what* so that initial forays into the topic describe what is going on.

### Setting

This study used a case study to examine perceptions of site-based management practices at Rainbow High School. Rainbow High school is a comprehensive high school with a student enrollment of approximately 1,715. It has a staff of 94 full-time teachers, 10 part-time teachers, seven aides, six counselors, one principal, three assistant principals, two librarians, one testing

coordinator, one school resource officer (SRO), and support personnel. The school draws from a densely populated area of Chesterfield County and serves students with a wide range of social backgrounds. The student enrollment is approximately 51% male and 49% female with an ethnic composition of 77.9% white, 12.9% African-American, 3.8% Asian, 3.3% Hispanic, and 2.2% other. Seventy-four percent of the students live two parents, 20% live with the mother only, 4% with the father only, and .9% live with “other” (foster parents, guardians, etc.). Forty-three percent of the students work a full or part-time job. Furthermore, students come from homes with a variety of parent occupations: 67% white collar, 26% service and blue collar, and 7% self-employed/retired.

Chesterfield County high schools do not participate in the federal free and reduced lunch program. Instead, Chesterfield County Public Schools’ Food Service Department absorbs the cost of free lunches for high school students who have a severe need determined by a parent or guardian submitting an application to Food Services. A family that receives any social services benefits, such as food stamps, automatically qualifies. Other families must write a letter explaining usual circumstances to qualify; for example, a divorce impacting family finances or death of a spouse may be qualifying criteria. The number of students who received free lunch at Rainbow High School during the 2002 school year was 27.

In addition, Rainbow High School serves students with a wide range of abilities. The curriculum includes classes to prepare students for a higher education or for the workplace. This school relies heavily on students’ grades, standardized test scores, and teacher recommendations to place students in courses. However, students are not automatically placed on the same level for all courses. For example, a student may be placed in an honors level English course but an

average mathematics course based on the following ability leveling system described by Chesterfield County Public Schools:

- X classes are for students who need more instruction in basic skills.
- Y classes are for students who are meeting fundamental grade level expectations.
- Z classes are for students who are meeting or exceeding grade level expectations.
- H classes are for students who have been placed in advanced/honors programs based on their having met specific criteria.
- AP designates advanced placement classes for students wishing to earn college credit by taking an end of the year assessment test.
- O classes are those in which students are not grouped by achievement and ability levels.
- C classes (comprehensive classes) are preparatory for higher education or employment upon graduation. This designation is used when Y and Z level students are grouped for instruction.

For students with special needs, special education services are provided, but these students are mainstreamed whenever possible. Twelve percent of the student body receives special education services.

With the surrounding grounds occupying a picturesque 75 acre site bordering Madison Lake, Rainbow High School opened in 1994 and drew students from Midlothian, Monacan, and Manchester attendance zones. There was no senior class the first year; the school took some time to establish its own traditions and culture. Rainbow High School piloted a semester block schedule for the first two years before replacing it with the current seven-period alternating block schedule.

For the last four years under the leadership of a new principal, Rainbow has implemented site-based management practices. Since the implementation of site-based practices, noteworthy school accomplishments include achieving State SOL accreditation in 2001 and 2002 and designation as a national “Blue Ribbon School of Excellence” in 2000. The 2001 Rainbow High School teacher of the year was named the Chesterfield Teacher of the Year and selected as the Regional Teacher of the Year. Other staff members have received the Chesterfield County Teacher of the Year award (Sallie Mae Award), the County Teacher of the Year Award, the REB award for excellence in teaching, and the Regional Art Teacher of the year Award.

Rainbow High School’s instructional programs are recognized as superior. A variety of academic, career development, technical, and fine arts courses are offered. Courses are available within the following areas of interest: advanced placement, honors, special education, basic, work study, vocational, and technology. Students are accepted to the nation’s top colleges and universities. Sixty-six percent (66%) of Rainbow students attend four-year colleges, (19%) attend two-year colleges, four percent seek other forms of continuing education, and (11%) seek employment or military service.

The school’s library media center is nationally recognized for “Excellence in Education,” and the resources are accessible in every classroom as well as at home for staff and students. The school’s marching band, the Regiment, earns the “Virginia Honor Band” distinction yearly. Members of the orchestra hold principal and concertmaster positions in Richmond Youth Symphonies. The choral department consistently receives superior ratings at festivals and competitions and the show choirs have won many choreography and vocal quality awards.

Extracurricular activities and clubs provide for well-rounded students. Thirty-eight athletic teams, representing 17 different sports, ranging from freshman through variety levels, are

a dominant force in AAA Dominion District competition. Students participate in the Virginia Math League and the American Mathematics competition.

Rainbow High School offers special innovative programs. For example, “Sure Success” is a comprehensive freshman study skills program. In addition, this school implements a community-wide reading project, *A Lesson Before Dying*, and a conflict resolution program. These types of program allow the community and school to work together.

The 2001 SAT test data report the Rainbow mean score to be 517 on verbal and 514 on math. The Virginia mean is 510 for verbal and 501 for math, and the national mean for verbal is 506 and 514 for math.

A school-wide focus on academic improvement continues. The school has set goals to improve Rainbow’s Standard of Learning (SOL) scores, safety issues, and technology concerns. Planning continues for a specialty center for leadership and international studies.

### Participants

The population for this study included all full-time teachers, guidance counselors, one principal, and three assistant principals with at least three years of experience from a single high school located in Chesterfield County Public Schools, Virginia. From the population, the researcher selected a subset of the entire population of the high school, specifically the 84 teachers, the two guidance counselors on the School Improvement Team, a principal, and an assistant principal. Because all of the administrators, teachers and guidance counselors comprised the purposive sampling, the researcher did not employ any other sampling procedures.

### Data Collection

Case studies data typically incorporate a multiple sources of information. According to Patton (1990), “by using a combination of observations, interviewing, and document analysis,

the fieldworker is able to use different data sources to validate and cross-check findings. For this study, the researcher utilized a focus group, a semi-structured interview, and a survey to triangulate the data.

### **Focus Group Protocol**

Before World War I, social scientists primarily used focus groups in academics and applied settings. After this war, they began experimenting with employing focus groups to evaluate audience response to live radio programs. During the 1950's through the 1980's, the use of focus groups shifted to marketing research. Marketing researchers called originally called these groups "focused interviews" or "group depth interviews." Today, focus groups continue to provide useful qualitative data about people's perceptions about a topic or program of interest (Morgan, 1998). Having certain characteristics in common, a focus group is a group of usually four to ten participants, interacting with each other about their perceptions regarding a research topic, program, or issue.

Although focus groups are a form of group interviewing, they are different. Group interviewing entails interviewing a group of participants at the same time with the emphasis on asking questions and obtaining responses. On the other hand, focus groups depend on "interaction within the group based on topics that are supplied by the researcher" (Morgan, 1998). The moderator or the facilitator can pose questions, but the participants can also ask each other questions as they interact with each other.

To assist others in understanding how focus groups function, Morgan (1998) compared and contrasted them to the most familiar contemporary research method – the survey questionnaire. For both methods, the researcher selects an interview topic and collects data from the participants. After collecting the data, the investigator analyzes the information and draws



conclusions based on the research questions. In contrast, surveys utilize well-developed sampling procedures relying on statistical formulas. For focus groups, the researcher uses best judgment to select a purposive sample of participants who will best satisfy the needs of the project. In addition, survey questions specify the exact number and same questions for predetermined response options. Unlike surveys, focus groups have more flexibility in how questions are asked. Additionally, the participants determine the nature of the responses. Furthermore, the researcher uses statistical procedures to analyze survey data, whereas analysis of focus groups involves listening and deciphering the content of the discussion.

As aforementioned, the present researcher utilized a focus group to gather qualitative data for the study. In no more than forty minutes, this researcher, who was the moderator, gathered information from the group during one session. Therefore, focus groups provide an efficient method to collect data. The group for this study was homogenous, consisting of administrators, department chairpersons, and guidance counselors who serve on the school improvement committee. Group members interacted with each other as the participants responded to the enumerated questions below. However, the participants posed questions and commented as they considered their perspectives in the context of others. As the moderator, this researcher guided the discussion by creating a permissive and nurturing environment, without exerting pressure on participants to reach a consensus (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Therefore, the moderator conducted the focus group session as naturally as possible. To facilitate identifying trends, patterns, or themes, the moderator used a tape recorder during each discussion to facilitate analysis. As a result, the focus group not only afforded a more in-depth study of site-based management at this school but also served as a check and balance to fortify the quantitative results of the study.

**The focus group protocol comprised the following questions:**

- 1. To what do you attribute the success this school has experienced over the last three or more years?**
- 2. What barriers or challenges have you experienced or observed related to this school's efforts to improve?**

### **Interview Protocol**

**This study utilized the semi-structured interview to pose questions. The researcher interviewed the principal, one assistant principal, and eight teachers with at least three years of experience to respond to the following questions:**

- 1. To what do you attribute the success the school has experienced over the last three or more years?**
- 2. What barriers or challenges have you experienced or observed related to this school's efforts to improve?**

**In addition to the key questions for the focus group and the semi-structured interview, the researcher posed the following probing questions as applicable:**

- 1. What does shared decision making mean to you?**
- 2. What is the decision-making process in this school?**
- 3. In what ways does teacher involvement in shared decision help improve student performance?**
- 4. What does school climate mean to you?**
- 5. Describe the school climate in this school.**
- 6. Describe the principal's relationship with the faculty and staff.**
- 7. What does student success mean to you?**

8. What can teachers do individually and collectively to ensure the success of all students?

9. In what ways is the school improvement plan operationalized in this school?

The following table delineates the number of the item that corresponds with each probing question:

**Table 8**

**Correlation of SBM Components and Number of Probing Questions**

<b>Components</b>	<b>Item Number</b>
Shared Decision Making	1,2, and 3
School Climate	4, 5, and 6
Student Success	7, 8, and 9

**Instrumentation**

As mentioned previously, this study also employed quantitative methodology. Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) defined quantitative or positivist research “as an inquiry that is grounded in the assumption that features of the social environment constitute an objective reality that is relatively constant across time and settings” (p. 767). They also stated that “the dominant methodology for this type of research is to describe and explain features of this reality by collecting numerical data on observable behaviors of samples and by subjecting these data to statistical analysis” (p. 767). To collect numerical data, this investigator chose a survey questionnaire because it can provide standardized information to facilitate analysis. This instrument served as the primary source of data for this study.

Although the present researcher searched the literature for available constructed survey questionnaires (e.g., Battcher, 1999; Leithwood & Aiken, 1995), the literature review did not reveal an instrument relevant to the purpose of this study or one comprehensive enough to measure site-based management components and school improvement. Therefore, she developed a questionnaire based on an extensive review of the literature. The following table delineates the number of the survey item that correlates with supporting empirical research:

**Table 9**

**Table of Specifications: Survey Items Matched with Supporting Empirical Studies**

Items	Shared Decision Making <sup>1</sup>	School Climate <sup>2</sup>	Student Success <sup>3</sup>
1		•	
2		•	
3			•
4			•
5	•		
6		•	
7	•		
8	•		
9		•	
10			
11	•		
12			•
13		•	
14	•		
15			•
16		•	
17			•
18	•		
19		•	
20	•		
21			•
22			•
23			•
24		•	
25			•
26			•
27			•
28		•	
29	•		
30		•	
31	•		
32		•	
33			•
34		•	
35			•
36			
37			•
38	•		
39		•	
40	•		
41			•
42	•		
43	•		
44	•		
45			•

<sup>1</sup> Shared decision-making research support is provided in Table 3.

<sup>2</sup> School climate research support is provided in Table 6.

<sup>3</sup> Student success research support is provided in Table 7.

Comprised of forty-five closed-form items, the questionnaire utilized a four-point Likert scale to note respondents' level of agreement with the survey statements (e.g., *strongly agree* rated 4, *somewhat agree* rated 3, *somewhat disagree* rated 2, or *strongly disagree* rated 1). The first part of the survey referred to the respondents' demographic information. However, items 1-45 explored the perceptions of the respondents regarding the independent variable, site-based management; and the dependent variables, school climate, student success, and shared decision making. Table 10 shows the distribution of survey items for each of the above components.

Table 10

**Distribution of Site-based Management Components and Survey Items**

Site-based Management Components	Corresponding Survey Items	Percentage
Shared Decision Making	5, 7, 8, 11, 14, 18, 20, 29, 31, 38, 40, 42, 43, 44	31
School Climate	1, 2, 6, 9, 10, 13, 16, 19, 24, 28, 30, 32, 34, 39	31
Student Success	3, 4, 12, 15, 17, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 33, 35, 36, 37, 41, 45	38

The study employed descriptive statistics to answer questions number one, two, and three. In addition, it employed an ANOVA to compare the differences among the responses of the administrators, teachers, and guidance counselors.

### **Pilot Study**

A pilot group, comprised of two principals, three assistant principals, three teachers, and three guidance counselors, reviewed the survey questionnaire to address matters concerning construct validity, reliability, and format presentation. Although the pilot group offered suggestions for improving the questionnaire in any area, the researcher requested specific feedback in these areas: (a) clarity of the directions, (b) clarity of the language, (c) length of the questionnaire, and (d) time spent to complete the questionnaire. In addition, the pilot group analyzed each item to evaluate whether it related to the designated sub-scale, shared decision making, school climate, or student success. After receiving this feedback, the researcher used an item analysis to ascertain the adequacy of the questionnaire.

### **Data Analysis**

This study utilized both quantitative and qualitative methods (see Table 11). Descriptive statistics, such as means and frequency distributions, were employed to summarize the demographic information. To analyze the results for research questions one, the researcher used descriptive statistics, mean and standard deviation. In addition, to compare the means of the three survey sub-scales, shared decision making, school climate, and school success, an ANOVA was employed. Furthermore, the data were collected from the focus group and interviews to answer questions two and three and were categorized based on a thematic analysis. To identify emergent themes, the researcher listened several times to the tape recording of the qualitative responses of the focus group and the participants in the semi-structured interviews, noting recurring themes (major words or points occurring at least two times in the responses). Typing the recorded transcript into a computer file further facilitated managing the data, searching for the emergent themes, and synthesizing participants' responses under these themes.

**Table 11**

**Data Collection and Analysis**

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Data Sources</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Data Analysis</b>
1. What are the perceptions of experienced teachers toward the key aspects of site-based management (shared decision making, school climate, and student success)?	Primary Data Source – 45-item survey with sub-scales of shared decision making, school climate, and student success	Experienced teachers (three or more years of experience)	Descriptive Statistics – mean and standard deviation  ANOVA – comparison of three sub-scales
2. What factors do experienced educators identify with promoting the successful implementation of site-based management components (shared decision making, school climate, and student success)?	Focus Group  Interviews	School Improvement Team (including two guidance counselors on this team)  Experienced Teachers  One Principal and One Assistant Principal	Thematic Analysis
3. What factors do experienced educators identify with hindering the successful implementation of site-based management components (shared decision making, school climate, and student success)?	Focus Group  Interviews	School Improvement Team (including two guidance counselors)  Experienced Teachers  One Principal and One Assistant Principal	Thematic Analysis

**Trustworthiness of Data**

Instead of using the term validity, most qualitative researchers prefer utilizing “qualitative equivalents that parallel traditional quantitative approaches to validity” (Cressman,



p. 199, 1998). For example, Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, and Steinmetz (1991) argued that “the language of positivistic [quantitative] research is not congruent with or adequate to qualitative work” (p. 95). Moreover, many qualitative researchers employ Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) alternative term, trustworthiness, which they assert, adheres more to a naturalistic study. Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993) stressed the importance of establishing trustworthiness:

If intellectual inquiry is to have an impact on human knowledge, either by adding to an overall body of knowledge or by solving a particular problem, it must guarantee some measure of credibility about what it has inquired, must communicate in a manner that will enable application by its intended audience, and must enable its audience to check on its findings and the inquiry process by which the findings were obtained. (p. 28)

To establish the trustworthiness of this study, this research addressed four qualitative methods suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985): “credibility,” “transferability,” “dependability,” and “confirmability” as “naturalistic equivalents” for “internal validity,” externality, “reliability,” and “objectivity” (p. 300).

### Credibility

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility is the extent to which findings and interpretations are viewed as credible by subjects who were the sources of the data. To ensure credibility, they proposed various techniques such as prolonged engagement, member checks, and triangulation of data sources and methods.

Prolonged engagement. Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen (1993) described prolonged engagement in the field:

...the researcher spending enough time in the context being studied to overcome the distortions that are due to his or her impact on the context, his or her own biases, and the effect of unusual or seasonal events. 'Enough' time in the context (culture) can be considered that amount that enables the researcher to understand daily events in the way that persons who are part of that culture (i.e. natives) interpret them. (p. 30)

Upon request, this researcher initially visited the school and gained the trust of the school improvement team and the gatekeeper or key informant, an assistant principal assigned to this study. The climate of the first meeting was very positive, and the committee members welcomed the opportunity to be a part of this research. In addition, the gatekeeper introduced the researchers to faculty and staff member as they visited the school. Throughout the duration of this study, the researcher visited the school to collect data. Since the initial meeting, the gatekeeper and this researcher communicated four times about this study to expedite data collection needs and scheduling time for those providing the data.

Member checks. (Erlandson et al., 1993; Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman. 1994). Member checking involves giving participants the opportunity to respond to the accuracy of the collected data and interpretations to verify whether they represent each participant's reality. Erlandson et al. (1993) asserted that "no data obtained through the study should be included in it if they cannot be verified through member checks" (p. 31). Similarly, Stake (1995) concurred that participants should "play a major role directing as well as acting in a case study. They should be asked to examine rough drafts of the researcher's work and to provide alternative language.... (p.115). Furthermore, member checking affords participants the opportunity to recall additional information or to share new perceptions (Gall et al.). For this study, participants received the questions asked during the interview and their

transcribed responses, affirming or disagreeing with the accuracy of the interpretation of collected data.

Dissertation committee member check. As the data are analyzed and interpreted, the researcher met with the dissertation advisor of this research. Data analysis procedures, findings, and any potential problems were addressed as needed.

### Transferability

Transferability refers to whether the findings fit contexts or situations outside this study. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), whether findings apply in some other context at a different time is “an empirical issue, the resolution of which depends upon the degree of similarity between sending and receiving contexts” (p. 316). Moreover, they declared that the naturalistic inquirer should provide rich, thick description to transfer information to other settings:

... the naturalistic inquirer cannot specify the external validity of an inquiry; he or she can provide only the thick description necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility.... The naturalistic inquirer is responsible for providing the widest possible range of information for inclusion in thick description. (p. 316)

Other researchers also asserted that rich, thick description provided detailed information of participants and setting which may be similar to situations or characteristics in other settings (Erlandson et al., 1993; Merriam, 1988). The transferability of this study will be determined by readers who compare their context with that of the study to decide whether the contexts are similar.

### **Dependability**

Dependability refers to a researcher providing a chain of evidence that another researcher can use to follow the decision trail of the research and arrive at the same or comparable conclusions. Researchers have recommended making a chain of evidence in the case study report by utilizing an audit trail, which documents the process and product (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1986; Miles and Huberman (1994). In this study, the researcher provided a description of data collection and analysis procedures. In addition, coding categories from the focus group and interview data were used to enhance an audit trail. Moreover, the researcher maintained a notebook of different phases of the research.

### **Confirmability**

Erlandson et al. (1993) contended that the “naturalistic researcher does not attempt to ensure that observations are free from contamination by the researcher but rather to trust in the ‘confirmability’ of the data themselves” (p. 34). “This means that data (construction, assertions, facts, and so on) can be tracked to their sources, and that the logic used to assemble the interpretations into structurally coherent and corroborating wholes is both explicit and implicit” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989. P. 243). Similar to the strategy for dependability, confirmability can be assessed through an audit trail.

### **Ethical Safeguards**

The present researcher conducted the study in a manner that protected the anonymity of the respondents. To protect their confidentiality, respondents did not identify themselves by name. When they had finished responding to the survey, they inserted their surveys into a large manila envelope that the site assistant principal assigned to assist in coordinating this study’s efforts sealed. Furthermore, the researcher used a pseudonym for the name of the school.

**When seeking permission to conduct this study, the researcher committed herself to respect and protect the confidentiality of the participants. In addition, the Human Subjects Committee of the College of William and Mary reviewed the proposal for this study for approval. Moreover, this researcher conducted the study according to acceptable practices. At the conclusion of this investigation, the school in this study received a copy of the findings in a timely manner.**

## **Chapter 4**

### **Analysis of Results**

**This single site case study examined administrators', experienced teachers, and guidance counselors' perceptions of site-based management and school improvement. More specifically, this chapter first presented an analysis and findings from a questionnaire that examined experienced teachers' perceptions of shared decision making, school climate, and student success on school improvement. In addition, the study employed a focus group and semi-structured interviews to identify and categorize emergent themes, focusing on factors promoting the successful implementation of key aspects of site-based management and on factors hindering the successful implementation of site-based management components.**

#### **Return Rate**

**Of the 94 full-time teachers, 86 respondents were classified as experienced teachers for this study, having accrued at least three years of teaching experience. Responses were received from 78 experienced teachers with an overall response rate of 91%. However, four returned surveys were unusable because the teachers left too many responses blank and/or did not include their age, which was essential information to meet the criteria for inclusion in the study.**

#### **Demographic Information**

**Part I of the *Inventory of Site-based Management Practices* included four items that provided background information gender, ethnic group, age, and total years of teaching experience. The 74 respondents comprised 25 males (34%) and 49 females (66%); the ethnicity included two Hispanics (3%), three African Americans (4%), and Caucasian (93%). In addition, the age of the respondents ranged from 25 years to 59 years with a mean of 41.15. The experience level of the respondents ranged from 3 to 33 years with a mean of 15.43 and a**

standard deviation of 9.35. Of the 74 respondents, 32 % reported that they had acquired 3 to 9 years of experience, and 68% indicated that they had acquired 10 or more years of teaching experience. Frequency counts and percentages for the responding experienced teachers are summarized in Table 12.

Table 12

**Frequencies and Percentages for Experienced Teachers**

Number of Years	Frequency Count	%
3 - 6	15	20.3
7 - 9	9	12.2
10 - 14	16	21.6
15 – 19	4	5.4
20 – 24	14	18.9
25 +	16	21.6
Total	74	100.0

**n = 74**

**Findings for Research Questions**

This study was conducted in two phases. Phase I examined teacher perceptions of site-based management relative to a questionnaire with three sub-scales -- shared decision making, school climate, and student success. Responses to these items were analyzed to answer question one. On the other hand, Phase II explored factors that contributed to the implementation of site-

based management, as well as factors that hindered the success of this strategy. Phase II explored question two and three. The following presentation of the results addressed the questions for each phase.

### Results from the Questionnaire

Research Question One: What are the perceptions of experienced teachers toward key aspects of site-based management (shared decision making, school climate, and student success)?

Part II of the questionnaire required respondents to rate their responses to 45 items on a four-point Likert scale by checking either *strongly agree*, *somewhat agree*, *somewhat disagree*, and *strongly disagree*. To facilitate analysis, 4 was assigned to *strongly agree*, 3 to *somewhat agree*, 2 to *somewhat disagree*, and 1 to *strongly disagree*. Responses to the 45 items were analyzed to answer research question one. The following sections discussed each of the key aspects that comprised a sub-scale.

#### Shared Decision Making

The sub-scale, shared decision making, was measured by items 5, 7, 8, 11, 14, 18, 20, 29, 31, 38, 40, 42, 43, and 44 (see Table 12). In response to item 5, the majority of the subjects (55.4%) strongly agreed, and 41.9% somewhat agreed that the faculty has opportunities to serve as a leader. Ranked 7<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 5 was 3.53, with a standard deviation of .55.

Item 7 examined whether the 74 experienced teachers were encouraged to design and implement programs to improve their school. The majority of the subjects (66.2%) who responded to item 7 strongly agreed, and 32.4% somewhat agreed that they are encouraged to design and implement programs to improve their school. Ranked 4<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for this item was 3.65, with a standard deviation of .51.



Further assessing teachers' involvement in improving their school, item 8 addressed whether teachers collaborated with administrators to develop the mission of the school. A majority of 67.6% strongly agreed with this statement, and 32.4% somewhat agreed. Ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 8 was 3.68, with a standard deviation of .47.

Item 11 considered whether students are involved in making important decisions regarding their school. Of the 74 respondents, less than half (45.9%) strongly agreed, and 50.0% somewhat agreed. Ranked 11<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 11 was 3.42, with a standard deviation of .57.

Item 14 examined whether data and research focused decisions. In response to question 14, less than one half (24.3%) strongly agreed, and the vast majority (62.1%) somewhat agreed that data and research drive decisions. Ranked 14<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 14 was 3.09, with a standard deviation of .64.

Item 18 addressed whether shared decision contributed to school improvement. Results for question 18 indicated that 58.1% of the teachers strongly agreed, and 39.2% somewhat agreed that shared decision making has helped improve their school. Ranked 6<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for this item was 3.55, with a standard deviation of .64.

Item 20 pertained to whether teachers perceived they helped establish policy. In reference to teachers helping to establish school policy, 35.0 % strongly agreed, and 51.4% somewhat agreed with question 20. Ranked 13<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 20 was 3.20, with a standard deviation of .70.

Item 29 pertained to teachers' perceptions of their involvement in developing the school improvement plan. In response to item 29, a vast majority (81.1%) reported that they strongly

agreed, and 18.9% somewhat agreed that they helped develop a school improvement plan for their school. Ranked 1<sup>st</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 29 was 3.81, with a standard deviation of .39.

Item 31 related to teachers' perceptions of their administrators facilitating decisions by sharing information with the faculty and staff. Of the 74 respondents, 73.0% strongly agreed, and 24.3% somewhat agreed that their administrators provided information to facilitate decision making. Ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 31 was 3.70, with a standard deviation of .52.

Item 38 dealt with the teachers' administrators seeking their viewpoint in school matters. Collected responses to item 38 indicated that 50.0% of the teachers agreed that their administrators seek their viewpoints on school issues, and 43.2% somewhat agreed. Ranked 10<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 38 was 3.43, with a standard deviation of .62.

Item 40 related to whether adequate time was provided for teachers to make decisions. Collected responses to item 40 indicated that 51.3% strongly agreed, and 41.9% somewhat agreed that teachers have adequate time allotted to make decisions related to school improvement. Ranked 9<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 40 was 3.45, with a standard deviation of .62.

Item 42 pertained to teachers feeling empowered to experiment new ideas and techniques to improve school improvement. Less than fifty percent (43.2%) strongly agreed, but more than half (51.4%) somewhat agreed with this statement. Ranked 12<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for this item was 3.38, with a standard deviation of .59.

Item 43 assessed whether teachers and administrators share the vision of the school. Nearly half (47.2%) of the teachers strongly agreed, and 51.4% somewhat agreed that the administrators and they share the vision of the school. Ranked 8<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 43 was 3.46, with a standard deviation of .53.

Finally, item 44 revealed teachers' perceptions regarding their desire to participate in shared decision making. From their response to item 44, teachers (58.1%) strongly agreed, and 41.9% somewhat agreed that they desired to continue to share in assisting to make decisions affecting their school. Ranked 5<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 44 was 3.58, with a standard deviation of .50.

Table 13

**Frequencies and Percentages of Responses to Shared Decision-Making Items**

<b>Shared Decision Making</b>	<b><i>f</i> Strongly Agree (%)</b>	<b><i>f</i> Somewhat Agree (%)</b>	<b><i>f</i> Somewhat Disagree (%)</b>	<b><i>f</i> Strongly Disagree (%)</b>
5. There are opportunities for faculty members to assume the role of a leader.	41 (55.4%)	31 (41.9%)	2 (2.7%)	0 (0%)
7. Teachers are encouraged to design and implement programs to improve the school overall.	49 (66.2%)	24 (32.4%)	1 (1.4%)	0 (0%)
8. The development of the mission of the school was the joint efforts of teachers and administrators.	50 (67.6%)	24 (32.4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
11. Students are involved in making decisions relevant to their school.	34 (45.9%)	37 (50.0%)	3 (4.1%)	0 (0%)
14. Data and research drive decisions.	18 (24.3%)	46 (62.1%)	9 (12.2%)	1 (1.4%)
18. Shared decision making has led to school improvement in this school.	43 (58.1%)	29 (39.2%)	2 (2.7%)	0 (0%)
20. Teachers help establish school policy.	26 (35.0 %)	38 (51.4%)	9 (12.2%)	1 (1.4%)
29. Teachers helped develop a school improvement plan for this school.	60 (81.1%)	14 (18.9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
31. The administration facilitates decision making by sharing information with the faculty and staff.	54 (73.0%)	18 (24.3%)	2 (2.7%)	0 (0%)
38. Administrators seek teachers' viewpoints on school issues.	37 (50.0%)	32 (43.2%)	5 (6.8%)	0 (0%)
40. Adequate time is allotted for making decisions leading to school improvement.	38 (51.3%)	31 (41.9%)	5 (6.8%)	0 (0%)
42. Teachers feel empowered to experiment with new ideas and techniques to improve school improvement.	32 (43.2% )	38 (51.4%)	4 (5.4%)	0 (0%)
43. Teachers and administrators share the vision of the school.	35 (47.2%)	38 (51.4%)	1 (1.4%)	0 (0%)
44. Teachers desire to continue to share in decision making relating to their school.	43 (58.1%)	31 (41.9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

n = 74

An analysis of the responses to items on the shared decision-making sub-scale indicated that there was little variability across the 14 items. Responses were largely supportive of the implementation of shared decision making at Rainbow High School. Nevertheless, items 8, 29,

and 44 received the strongest support with 100% of the respondents marking either strongly agree or somewhat agree. On the other hand, item 14 received less support with 24.3% strongly agreeing and 62.1% somewhat agreeing, as well as item 20, which received 51.4% strongly agreeing and 35.0% somewhat agreeing.

### **School Climate**

In addition to the shared decision-making sub-scale, the school climate sub-scale also was used to answer research question one. The school climate sub-scale was measured by items 1, 2, 6, 9, 10, 13, 16, 19, 24, 28, 30, 32, 34, and 39 (see Table 14).

Item 1 addressed whether teachers engaged in open, honest communication with their colleagues. Among the 74 responses to item 1, more than a half of the teachers (64.9%) strongly agreed, and 32.4% somewhat agreed that they engage in open, honest communication with their colleagues. Ranked 9<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item was 3.62, with a standard deviation of .54.

Item 2 examined teacher perceptions of collegial sharing. Responding to item 2, a vast majority of 70.3% indicated that there is collegial sharing of ideas in this school, and 29.7% somewhat agreed. Ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for this item was 3.70, with a standard deviation of .46.

Item 6 assessed whether the school was continuously emphasizing high achievement by students and employees. A vast majority (70.3%) strongly agreed, and 28.3% somewhat agreed that there is an emphasis on continuous high achievement by students and employees. Ranked 5<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 6 was 3.69, with a standard deviation of .49.

Item 9 ascertained whether serious discipline problems were decreasing. Teachers' responses to item 9 indicated that only 17.5% strongly agreed, and 56.8% somewhat agreed that discipline warranting an office referral is decreasing. Ranked 14<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 9 was 2.89, with a standard deviation of .71.

Item 10 considered the comfort level of the teachers expressing their viewpoints without repercussions. When asked whether staff members feel free to express personal concern without repercussions, 43.2% strongly agreed, but 45.9% somewhat agreed to item 10. Ranked 12<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for this item was .70, with a standard deviation of .70.

Item 13 addressed whether teachers have professional opportunities to develop their skills. The responses indicated 71.6% strong agreement and 25.7% somewhat agreement. Ranked 4<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 13 was 3.69, with a standard deviation of .52.

For item 16, teachers were asked to rate their perception of the increase of job productivity in their school. Less than 50% strongly agreed, but 60.8% somewhat agreed that job productivity had increased. Ranked 11<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for question 16 was 3.34, with a standard deviation of .53.

Item 19 inquired about a low teacher absentee rate. Less than 50% strongly agreed, but 52.7% somewhat agreed that their school has a low teacher absentee rate. Ranked 13<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 19 was 3.31, with a standard deviation of .68.

Item 24 assessed whether safety was not an issue at school. Teachers indicated that 67.5% strongly agreed, and 31.1% somewhat agreed with this statement. Ranked 6<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for this item was 3.66, with a standard deviation of .50.

**Item 28 considered whether the school permeated with a positive spirit. Analysis of teacher responses to item 28 indicated that 64.9% strongly agreed, and 35.1% somewhat agreed that a positive feeling permeates the building. Ranked 7<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for this item was 3.65, with a standard deviation of .48.**

**Item 30 addressed celebrating successes of the school. A vast majority (85.1%) of teachers strongly acknowledged question 30, indicating that they celebrate milestones of success. However, 14.9% somewhat agreed. Ranked 1<sup>st</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for this item was 3.85, with a standard deviation of .36.**

**Item 32 reflected on collegial relationships relative to treating each other with respect and dignity. For item 32, over one half of the respondents (58.1%) observed that employees treat each other with respect and dignity, and 37.8% somewhat agreed. Ranked 10<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for this item was 3.54, with a standard deviation of .58.**

**Item 34 pertained to perceiving whether the classroom atmosphere is generally conducive to learning. Respondents reported 63.5% strong agreement with this statement, and 35.1% somewhat agreed. Ranked 8<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for this item was 3.62, with a standard deviation of .52.**

**Finally, item 39 inquired whether staff members and students receive recognition for accomplishments and contributions. Respondents (68.9%) strongly agreed, and 31.1% somewhat agreed that staff members and students are recognized for their accomplishments and contributions. Ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 39 was 3.69, with a standard deviation of .47.**

Table 14

**Frequencies and Percentages of Responses to School Climate Items**

School Climate	<i>f</i> Strongly Agree (%)	<i>f</i> Somewhat Agree (%)	<i>f</i> Somewhat Disagree (%)	<i>f</i> Strongly Disagree (%)
1. There is honest, open communication among colleagues in this school.	48 (64.9%)	24 (32.4%)	2 (2.7%)	0 (0%)
2. There is collegial sharing of ideas in this school.	52 (70.3%)	22 (29.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
6. There is an emphasis on continuous high achievement by students and employees at school.	52 (70.3%)	21 (28.3%)	1 (1.4%)	0 (0%)
9. Discipline which warrants an office referral is decreasing.	13 (17.5%)	42 (56.8%)	17 (23.0%)	2 (2.7%)
10. Staff members feel free to express professional concerns without repercussions.	32 (43.2%)	34 (45.9%)	7 (9.5%)	1 (1.4%)
13. Teachers have professional opportunities to develop skills.	53 (71.6%)	19 (25.7%)	2 (2.7%)	0 (0%)
16. Job productivity has increased in this school.	27 (36.5%)	45 (60.8%)	2 (2.7%)	0 (0%)
19. This school has a low teacher absentee rate.	30 (40.5%)	39 (52.7%)	3 (4.1%)	2 (2.7%)
24. The faculty, staff, and students feel safe at school.	50 (67.5%)	23 (31.1%)	1 (1.4%)	0 (0%)
28. A positive feeling permeates this school.	48 (64.9%)	26 (35.1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
30. This school celebrates its successes when milestones are accomplished.	63 (85.1%)	11 (14.9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
32. Employees at this school treat each other with respect and dignity.	43 (58.1%)	28 (37.8%)	3 (4.1%)	0 (0%)
34. Classroom atmosphere is generally conducive to learning.	47 (63.5%)	26 (35.1%)	26 (1.4%)	0 (0%)
39. Staff members and students are recognized for their accomplishments and contributions.	51 (68.9%)	23 (31.1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

$n = 74$

An analysis of responses to items on the school climate sub-scale indicated that there was little variability across the 14 items. Responses were largely supportive that the climate at Rainbow is positive. Items 2, 28, 30, and 39 received the strongest support with 100% of the respondents marking either strongly agree or somewhat agree. Nevertheless, items 9, 10, 16, and



19 received less support with only 17.6%, 43.2%, 36.5%, and 40.5% strongly agreeing, respectively.

### **Student Success**

The sub-scale, student success, was measured by items 3, 4, 12, 15, 17, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 33, 35, 36, 37, 41, and 45 (see Table 15). Item 3 pertained to students' developing an understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity. According to the 74 experienced teachers' responses, 51.3% strongly agreed, with a 47.3% somewhat agreeing. Ranked 11<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 3 was 3.49, with a standard deviation of .58.

Item 4 referred to an emphasis on technology. Teachers' responses to item 4 indicated that 51.3% strong agreed, with 33.8% somewhat agreeing. Ranked 15<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 4 was 3.35, with a standard deviation of .77.

Item 12 concerned setting high expectations for all students. A vast majority (71.6%) of the teachers strongly agreed, and 25.6% somewhat agreed that the school has high expectations for all students. Ranked 4<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 12 was 3.68, with a standard deviation of .58.

Item 15 inquired about the student failure rate. Responses to item 15 indicated that only 27.0% strongly agreed, and 68.9% somewhat agreed that the student failure rate is low. Ranked 15<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 15 was 3.22, with a standard deviation of .56.

Item 17 addressed instructional practices employing higher-order thinking skills. Analysis of responses for item 17 resulted in 44.6% strongly agreeing, with most of the teachers (52.7%) somewhat agreeing that the faculty implements instruction that engages students in

utilizing higher-order thinking. Ranked 12<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 17 was 3.42, with a standard deviation of .55.

Item 21 examined whether teachers widely vary their methods to assess student performance. They reported 50.0% strong agreement and 48.6% somewhat agreement with this statement. Ranked 10<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for this item was 3.49, with a standard deviation of .53.

Item 22 pertained to teachers collectively accepting responsibility for student achievement. Over half of the respondents (54.0%) strongly agreed, and 44.6% somewhat agreed with item 22, indicating that they share collective responsibility for student achievement. Ranked 9<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 22 was 3.53, with a standard deviation of .53.

Item 23 examined whether the student dropout rate has declined over the last three years. Only 18.9% of the teachers strongly agreed, and a vast majority of the respondents (75.7%) somewhat agreed that the student dropout rate has decreased over the last three years. Ranked 16<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 23 was 3.12, with a standard deviation of .50.

Item 25 asked teachers to confirm whether they contacted parents on a regular basis to meet students' needs. Over half (56.8%) strongly agreed, and 41.8% somewhat agreed that they did. Ranked 6<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 25 was 3.55, with a standard deviation of .53.

Item 26 addressed students participating in a variety of extracurricular activities. A vast majority of 71.6% strongly agreed, and 28.4% somewhat agreed with this statement. Ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>

among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 26 was 3.74, with a standard deviation of .45.

Item 27 pertained to whether there was an emphasis and creativity in fine arts. Of the respondents, 74.3% strongly supported this statement, and 25.7% somewhat agreed. Ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 27 was 3.74, with a standard deviation of .44.

Item 33 ascertained whether a high percentage of students attended a college or university or vocational school as post-secondary choices. A vast majority (86.5%) strongly acknowledged that this is the case, with 13.5% somewhat agreeing. Ranked 7<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 33 was 3.86, with a standard deviation of .55.

Item 35 pertained to whether students provided services for the school and community. A majority of 56.8% strongly agreed, and 40.5% somewhat agreed with this item. Ranked 7<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 35 was 3.54, with a standard deviation of .55.

Item 36 assessed whether teachers actively engaged students in their learning. For item 36, a little over a half (54.0%) strongly agreed, and 44.6% somewhat agreed that instructional activities engage students in their own learning. Ranked 8<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 36 was 3.03, with a standard deviation of .53.

Item 37 addressed the increase of daily student attendance rates over the last three years. The majority of the teachers (60.8%) somewhat agreed that the student attendance rates during this period had increased, while only 21.6% strongly agreed. Ranked 17<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 37 was 3.74, with a standard deviation of .66.

Item 41 pertained to instructional strategies accommodating students' diverse learning styles. The majority of the teachers (60.8%) somewhat agreed, while 37.8% strongly agreed. Ranked 13<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 41 was 3.36, with a standard deviation of .51.

Finally, item 45 reflected on teachers regularly assigning homework. A majority of 67.5% responded that homework is assigned on a regular basis, while 31.1% somewhat agreed. Ranked 5<sup>th</sup> among the means for this sub-scale, the mean for item 45 was 3.66, with a standard deviation of .50.

Table 15

**Frequencies and Percentages of Responses to Student Success Items**

Student Success	<i>f</i> Strongly Agree (%)	<i>f</i> Somewhat Agree (%)	<i>f</i> Somewhat Disagree (%)	<i>f</i> Strongly Disagree (%)
3. Students have developed an understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity.	38 (51.3%)	35 (47.3)	1 (1.4%)	0 (0%)
4. There is an emphasis on technology in this building.	38 (51.3%)	25 (33.8%)	10 (13.5%)	1 (1.4%)
12. This school has high expectations.	53 (71.6%)	19 (25.6%)	1 (1.4%)	1 (1.4%)
15. There is a low failure rate at this school.	20 (27.0%)	51 (68.9)	2 (2.7)	1 (1.4%)
17. The faculty employs teaching strategies that require students to utilize higher-order thinking.	33 (44.6%)	39 (52.7%)	2 (2.7%)	0 (0%)
21. Teachers utilize a wide variety of methods to assess student performance.	37 (50.0%)	36 (48.6%)	1 (1.4%)	0 (0%)
22. Teachers accept collective responsibility for student achievement.	40 (54.0%)	33 (44.6%)	1 (1.4%)	0 (0%)
23. The student dropout rate has decreased over the last three years.	14 (18.9%)	56 (75.7%)	4 (5.4%)	0 (0.0%)
25. Teachers contact parents on a regular basis to meet students' needs.	42 (56.8%)	31 (41.8%)	1 (1.4%)	0 (0%)
26. Students participate in a variety of extracurricular activities.	53 (71.6%)	21 (28.4)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
27. There is an emphasis and creativity in fine arts.	55 (74.3%)	19 (25.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
33. Upon graduation, a high percentage of students enroll in a college or university or a vocational school as their post-secondary choices.	64 (86.5%)	10 (13.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
35. Students provide services for the school and community.	42 (56.8%)	30 (40.5%)	2 (2.7%)	0 (0%)
36. Instructional strategies actively involve students in their learning.	40 (54.0%)	33 (44.6%)	1 (1.4%)	0 (0%)
37. Daily attendance rates have increased over the last three years.	16 (21.6%)	45 (60.8%)	12 (16.2%)	1 (1.4%)
41. Instructional strategies accommodate students' diverse learning styles.	28 (37.8)	45 (60.8%)	1 (1.4%)	0 (0%)
45. Homework is assigned on a regular basis.	50 (67.5%)	23 (31.1%)	1 (1.4%)	0 (0%)

$n = 74$

An analysis of responses to items comprising the student success sub-scale indicated that respondents strongly supported items 26, 27, and 33 with 100% marking either strongly agree or somewhat disagree. Nevertheless, items 15, 17, 23, 37, and 41 received less support with only 27.0%, 44.6%, 18.9%, 21.6%, and 37.8% strongly agreeing.

### **ANOVA: Sub-scales of Site-based Management Practices**

#### **Statistics Used**

To compare the less experienced teachers', more experienced teachers', and most experienced teachers' responses to the school climate, shared decision-making, and student success sub-scales, the researcher used an SPSS computer program to generate the results of an ANOVA to compare the means of these three groups. The results of the analysis of variance are presented below in Table 16.

Table 16

#### **Analysis of Variance Results for Key Components of Site-based Management**

Dependent Variable	Mean	SD	Mean Square Between	Mean Square Within	F	P
School Climate	50.00	4.83	.574	24.07	.024	.976
Shared Decision Making	49.00	5.17	7.36	27.38	.271	.764
Student Success	59.29	5.09	30.36	25.81	1.18	.314

The researcher determined whether the F-ratio far exceeded 1, which is the approximate variability expected by chance. The data revealed that the F-ratio did not far exceed 1. As a result, no further follow-up tests were needed. Instead, the researcher compared the *p* value with an alpha value of .05 to determine whether a statistically significant difference existed among the sub-scales based on respondents' experience. The results for the school climate, shared decision-making, and student success sub-scales indicate a *p* of .976, .764, and .314, respectively. Since *p* > .05, the means of the three groups were determined not to be significantly different.

**Research Question Two: What factors do experienced educators identify with the successful implementation of site-based management components (shared decision making, school climate, and student success)?**

To answer question two, qualitative data collected from a focus group and semi-structured interviews were examined for frequency of recurring responses. These recurring responses were categorized into four themes: (a) leadership, (b) shared decision making, (c) school climate, and (d) professional community (see Table 17).

**Table 17**

**Qualitative Sources Relative to the Success of the School**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Keywords/Descriptors</b>	<b>Focus Group</b>	<b>Interviews</b>
<b>Leadership</b>	• Demonstrating strong administrative leadership	•	•
	• Implementing the school vision, mission, and plan	•	•
	• Setting high expectations for teachers and students	•	•
	• Supporting teachers	•	•
	• Being accessible	•	•
	• Listening attentively	•	•
<b>Shared Decision Making</b>	• Involving faculty and staff in making decisions	•	•
	• Seeking input from departments	•	•
	• Seeking input from students		•
	• Involving stakeholders in developing the school improvement plan	•	•
	• Deriving decisions using the Principal's Advisory Committee	•	•
	• Facilitating the work of a recently recognized Blue Ribbon School	•	•
	• Collaborating with school committees	•	•
<b>School Climate</b>	• Appreciating and recognizing accomplishments	•	•
	• Maintaining a clean, safe environment	•	•
	• Maintaining an atmosphere conducive to learning and working	•	•
<b>Professional Community</b>	• Developing the school improvement plan	•	•
	• Accepting collective responsibility for student success	•	•
	• Serving on school committees	•	•



## **Results from the Focus Group and Interviews**

### **Leadership**

The focus group unanimously attributed the success of Rainbow High School to a strong administrative team that shares its vision and clearly sets teacher expectations and student expectations relative to an understanding of the school mission, goals, and the school improvement plan for attaining these goals. The following comment typifies the reaction of the focus group regarding the administration's setting clear expectations:

I think we have an awesome administration.... The expectations are really high. As a teacher, I appreciate that because I know what to expect from them. I know what they expect from me. Therefore, I can give students clear expectations, and I know I'll be backed up if my expectations are not followed. So that's a good thing.

In addition, the focus group also expressed that the principal, who values and respects teachers and "knows their names," does a great job. He is very professional, accessible, and supportive. The following participant's response is a typical characterization of the principal:

... there is a good mix of staying out of the way, allowing people to do what they need to do. I think he is very judicious in the times when he needs to step in. I think the principal is a get-it-done type of person. If you have something that needs attention, he listens, attends to it, and gets it done. Even if it's not the answer you want, it's been addressed; and you have a chance to air your concerns, either way. I think he does a very good job in this school.

Moreover, the focus group indicated that the principal has earned the respect of the faculty for "handling things the way they need to be handled." For example, as one group member expounded, perhaps the principal's first message to the faculty was stressing the importance of

professionalism, behaving like professionals and wearing professional attire, except on Friday's, when the faculty can wear a "Success Sure" shirt. This participant's comments also reflected the group's thoughts on "tightening the reins" of professionalism:

It does make us look more professional when we are dressed up. That was kind of [the principal's] first message to us: We are going to look professional. We are going to act professional. This is going to be a top-of-the-line school. It was met with a lot of criticism when he first did it. Now everybody is used to it. I think it has caught on really well. Teachers are concerned about what he thinks.... They don't want to disappoint him. So I would say he is commended for that.

Similarly, responses from the semi-structured interviews indicated the sentiments expressed by the focus group. One interviewee that has been at Rainbow High School since its opening in 1994 – 1995 remarked that there is no question that the change in the leadership has contributed to the success of this school. There has been a positive change in students' attitude toward school and approach to learning because of this leadership. Even the approach to teaching is different and more productive. The principal and the other administrators set the pace for how things are done in this particular building, and the teachers "pretty much follow through with the professionalism." According to this interviewee, "it is amazing how one person or a small group of people can send that message throughout the school, even to the freshmen. When you walk into the building, there is a different sense. You want to belong here."

Still another interviewee related that definitely over the last three years, the administration and their vision contributed to the success of the school, as well as the way the administration has involved the entire staff including support staff, custodians, food services workers in investing in the vision and mission. Furthermore, the administration seeks and listens

to input from the students and uses some of their ideas to help this school become more successful. Mr. P's, the principal, also involves the community by having informal coffees in the communities rather than expecting the community to come to him always. These coffees are not moaning or gripping sessions, but sharing sessions.

During Mr. P's interview, this researcher observed that he has developed expertise as a facilitative leader. Under Mr. P's facilitative leadership, Rainbow High School has become fully accredited, having passed the required SOL tests. He attributed the success of the school to the students and teachers, indicating that the school is "blessed to have a student body that is as goal-oriented, though it is diverse." The students are focused, for the most part, on being successful. Furthermore, the teachers inculcate the belief in them that they can do be successful, and they are expected to do it. Further commenting on expectations, he stated: "We have high expectations, and we are fairly consistent in promoting them, doing the right thing, and attempting to be as successful as [we] can be." Although he objected to the approach of the SOL's, he related that knowing the benchmark to reach and having a targeted focus, such as the blueprints and pacing charts, make "life a little simpler in terms of identifying the target." Therefore, Rainbow works collectively to perform well on the SOL's.

Beyond performing well on the SOL's, Rainbow has achieved national recognition as a Blue Ribbon School, especially the library which is nationally recognized. According to Mr. P, "being a Blue Ribbon school or having a library that is nationally recognized ratchets up the level of expectation and feeling that we can always do more, and we are expected to do more." He further related, "just because we have some outside validation that we are pretty good at what we do, we can always get better." Therefore, even though this high school has been nationally

recognized, Mr. P aspires to even a higher level of expectation. Reflecting on this national success, he commented:

...it doesn't come easily. It's a lot of hard work on the part of the teachers, the administrative staff, and the support staff. Nobody can do this on [his or her] own. It's a group effort, and it's convincing people that they can do it, especially students.

Data collected from Mrs. A, one of the assistant principals, also substantiated that Rainbow has effective leadership. Mrs. A indicated that the principal is very knowledgeable whether he is leading the school as a manager or as an instructional leader. With pride, she commented that the principal has helped this school evolve into a Blue Ribbon School by facilitating collective creativity and teamwork. Moreover, she expressed that she enjoys working with him because he has "people skills" that facilitate collegial working relationships. In addition, she commented that all of the administrators hold themselves to high expectations by leading by example, as well as setting expectations for teachers and students.

### Shared Decision Making

Reflecting on involving teachers in decision making, the focus group concurred that the principal has acquired expertise in decision making, and certainly they do not expect him to consult with teachers to make many decisions. However, he does consult with assistant principals who have assigned areas of responsibility. Nevertheless, as one respondent stated, "I do think if he is in doubt, he does consult. He will ask my opinion, or he will ask someone. He gets us working on ... research projects [or subcommittees] for him." In this manner, he shares decision making by asking for teachers' input. If a concern is localized to a specific department, usually the department chairperson consults with the administrator who supervises that department. In turn, that administrator discusses the concern with the department chairperson

and/or the department and derives a solution. On the other hand, department members can also make decisions with the department chair's seeking their input, so "whatever decision is made, most of the time it is a group effort."

Based on a content analysis of the focus group data, the Principal Advisory Committee (PAC) addresses major issues that impact the entire school. Comprised of department chairpersons and support personnel, such as guidance counselors, the athletic director, and the psychologist, PAC meets with the principal monthly or more often as needed. This committee derives an understanding of concerns and issues and discusses them with their various departments. Sometimes, after departmental input, the faculty assembles to vote on a resolution to a problem. For instance, in June 2002, the Virginia Department of Education wanted high schools to administer Standards of Learning (SOL) expedited re-take tests to students who failed SOL tests. Because this re-take would affect the entire school, the testing coordinator conferred with the principal and proposed a plan, which they presented to the PAC. The PAC posed questions about the plan and revised it. After department chairpersons received input from their departments, a general announcement about administering the SOL-expedited re-take tests was made.

Another example of shared decision making that the group discussed was the development of the school improvement plan. Under the leadership of Mrs. A, one of the assistant principals, the faculty explored their weaknesses in the school and as a team. Then, they presented the weaknesses to the faculty or to departments if they were department-specific. For example, to increase the math SOL scores, the math department generated strategies and activities based on the weaknesses. For other disciplines that affected the entire school such as technology, key people involved with technology formed a committee of people drawn from

throughout the departments because technology affected everybody in the school. The committee members filtered information to their areas, attained more input, and presented it to the faculty. Then, the school improvement plan was presented to the faculty for approval.

Sometimes, the administration shares decision making by asking designated departments or individuals to respond to information. One of the respondents afforded an example of this process:

I can tell you that recently something came up in response to theater productions, musical productions, and English literature regarding what is appropriate for students.... It was a rough draft of something the county wants to put in place to make sure that teachers follow appropriate guidelines for teaching theater, music, and literature to our students. Mr. P put a copy of this in our boxes and asked us for our feedback. Therefore, we were given the opportunity to look at this and give our opinion on it. The way we did it in our department was that the choral and theater teachers discussed it, and together we came up with some bullet points which we discussed with Mr. P. He took it from there and presented it to Dr. K, [the superintendent], who generated the paper.

Similar to data collected from the focus group, data from the semi-structured interviews substantiated that Rainbow High School is a community where everybody plays a role in making decisions. Mr. P, the principal, involves the stakeholders of the school. One interviewee shared this statement about decision making in her school:

Mr. P is very student and faculty-oriented. He goes out of his way to find out what the needs of his school are. He delegates certain responsibilities to others to help facilitate programs to be successful or more successful. Even though we are a Blue Ribbon school, we constantly are trying to implement new ideas to make us better.

Through student forums and clubs, students share ideas with the administration. He has coffees in the neighborhoods to talk to parents to get a feel for the climate of the school. Similar to these community coffees, he has monthly coffees at school. During this Cookies and Chat Session, he is available the entire day in the ninth-grade wing, where teachers can come during their planning periods to express any concern. After these sessions, he disseminates the written concerns which the faculty can address at the monthly faculty meeting.

Additionally, the interviewees substantiated that the administration schedules Principal Advisory Council (PAC) meetings bimonthly to confer with department chairpersons and other key people. Those persons have an opportunity to express concerns and channel information and concerns to their respective departments. For example, PAC channeled information to the departments to decide the most effective way to administer the expedited SOL re-take tests. Moreover, when the school decided to read the book, *A Lesson Before Dying*, PAC discussed this project with the departments to reach a school-wide consensus. Then, a committee from each department in the building implemented the project.

Sometimes, however, it is not necessary for decisions to involve a number of people. If the faculty and staff have feasible ideas that they want to implement, the principal will say, "All right, go ahead and do it." On the other hand, when the principal makes decisions, the faculty and staff can offer a "better way." According to one interviewee, "It's not like a dictatorship."

During his interview, Mr. P indicated that he strives to encourage the faculty and staff to take the initiative to ask questions and to participate in the "democratic process" of decision making if they desire. Open to new ideas, he remarked that many "folks" in the building are interested in gaining experience in implementing a new idea, a plan, or activity. Collectively, he feels the faculty and staff can derive solutions that "make the most sense for students," without

always assigning a committee to study ideas. In fact, he commented, “If we have good ideas and they make sense, we incorporate them as soon as possible.”

In an attempt to describe his decision-making model, Mr. P pondered whether he uses a specific model. He joked that the school division years ago asserted the directive, “Thou shalt have shared decision making, and we will have it this way!” On the contrary, he expressed the need for each building and each school committee to adjust decisions, based on their needs. With the decentralization of some decisions to the schools, Rainbow utilizes “some hybrid model that works for this school and community.” He thinks it makes sense to involve the stakeholders without “letting the process bog down the need to make an expedient decision.”

Building consensus, Mr. P consults with various groups. For example, he consults with department chairpersons, the Principal Advisory Council (PAC), and the Parents, Teachers, and Students Association (PTSA). Various study groups examined the dress code, the honor system (evolved from the student-leadership council for study), early exams for seniors and all students next year, and the effective use of time. These groups presented their findings to the faculty for approval. Moreover, he garners ideas from monthly coffees with students, with teachers, and with the neighborhoods.

Mr. P also delegates decision-making authority to the administrative staff. For example, Mrs. A, an assistant principal, spearheads the School Improvement Team. Mr. P. says she is “in charge of making sure what we have said on paper is what is going to happen in real life. I basically leave it up to her. I basically allow that committee to run that show.” The School Improvement Plan (SIP) mainly focuses on improving SOL’s and areas like safety and security.

Similarly, Mrs. A, who spearheads the SIP, reflected on shared decision making at Rainbow. According to her, the development of the SIP was a shared decision-making effort



based on a committee of faculty members and parents. To evaluate the school's needs, the committee involved each department in sharing decisions regarding the school's vision and mission statements, strengths, and weaknesses. After an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses, committees comprised of staff members, students, and community representatives developed an action plan to improve the areas of weaknesses. Thus, the SIP was a shared decision-making effort. Mrs. A commented further that faculty members share ideas with the administration. Although the administration meets with PAC bimonthly to address concerns or issues, this advisory committee involves their departments in making decisions. Moreover, Mr. P hosts monthly coffees for the staff and the communities to share concerns or ideas. In addition, the administration seeks the input of a student leadership committee when making some decisions.

### **School Climate**

In addition to shared decision making, the focus group indicated that their school climate contributes to the success of their school. To show appreciation and recognize accomplishments, the principal takes time to write notes to the faculty and staff. These notes make everyone feel valued. As one respondent remarked, "If you are on a committee or if you win an award, you get a note in your box the next day saying "I appreciate what you did.... It seems kind of rare for other schools to say those things." Collectively, respondents expressed that they were proud that the school does a good job of creating a warm, safe, and clean school environment that is conducive to learning. In addition, when students travel to other schools, they remark, "Our school is so much cleaner than this." One respondent captured the sentiment of the group with her remark:

Our school is a good place to be. Most teachers like being here. I think when I personally look out there at other schools I would much rather be here than any other in the county. I drive the extra distance to come here. I think this is the best high school in the county and the place to be. I think students and parents all like the school, and I think teachers do, too.

Additionally, another respondent stressed the importance of school climate:

One thing I point out to parents is that Mr. P likes to talk about civility, acting civil. He is pretty adamant about that. We all support that.... I think our students act civil. Students ought to be able to feel safe. I think we have that. I think that's one of our strengths.

Another group member further commented about the importance of good discipline:

The other part is just the organization of the school runs so well. Every school has problems, but I think overall the discipline, anything that is negative, is kept at a minimum, so you are able not only to take an idea but also to go with it. You are treated like a professional, and you are given the environment to carry through ideas and work with the students.

According to interview respondents, the school climate is a relaxed and comfortable but professional atmosphere. The administration has set a standard about dress and about the way people respond to others, their peers, superiors, or students. They have high standards and hold teachers and students accountable for their behaviors. In addition, the administration's support of the teachers and students is just "incredible." Overall, there is a good feeling of pride that is basically instilled by the administration to the teachers and to the students.

One respondent commented that Mr. P wants the best for the students. As a result of students knowing that he cares, they try extra hard. Engaged in well-prepared lessons, students feel comfortable learning as teachers create a caring, comfortable, clean climate in the classroom, building students' self-esteem: "You are going to make mistakes, you are valued in this classroom, and you don't have to be perfect." Furthermore, the environment is controlled so that students "are not afraid they are going to get beaten up in class." Involvement in a school-wide reading of the book, *A Lesson Before Lying*, further enhanced the school climate as students and the faculty shared their thoughts and feelings about the book.

Additionally, Mr. P listens to and recognizes students for their accomplishments. For instance, he met with student representatives to discuss the feasibility of a matter as simple as having toilet paper dispensers in the bathrooms for unrolling it. Later, he had them installed. In addition, whether it is a Spelling Bee winner or other academic award, he writes students a note and gives them M&M's. This type of recognition spurs students on and makes them feel valued.

Respondents also remarked that the climate is very warm, friendly, and diverse. One commented that she personally likes "the mix of kids here. We have the socioeconomic affluent kids to the most needy...." Although the students come from various areas, they get along well with each other, regardless of their ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Like the interviewees, Mr. P expressed similar thoughts about the school climate. He described the climate of Rainbow as "healthy for everybody, students, teachers, administrators, counselors, support people, and custodians." Without a doubt, he reflected that people who work here or send their children here predominantly would concur "that this is a pretty nice school and they like working here. They like coming to school here." According to him, it is "a tight ship," where "it's not all fun and games"; but people like working here, attending this school, and

getting the “job done.” As a result, the climate is a positive environment for high school students.

In addition, he commented that the climate impacts upon indicators of student success. He espoused the belief that students must feel good about what they do and how they do it. They should also be recognized for their success and continue to have a variety of opportunities within the building to be successful. Furthermore, it is important to establish a support system of caring and competent adults with whom students can consult. Such a support system can deter constant fights, tension in the halls, horrible language, and disrespectfulness. Even though he mentioned other areas of student success affected by climate, such as passing rates, test scores, attendance rates, and college acceptance rates, he emphasized affective indicators where the students feel appreciated, respected, and valued. In his words, he further explained the importance of a positive climate:

In a positive environment, students are going to perform better where they like the school. They think it is clean. Teachers like working here will likely do a better job with students. Therefore, student achievement is all tied together with affective issues in the school that will indirectly impact them.

During her interview, Mrs. A also described the positive climate of the school. Her comments and the researcher’s observations substantiated that the school environment is clean, safe, orderly, and conducive to learning. Furthermore, she related that the administration and teachers respect each other and collaborate to encourage and support the students. She also pointed out that the school walls that the researcher was observing earlier always has student artwork or some other type of student work on it. Additionally, displays of student work and painted decorations adorned the walls, showcases, and columns throughout the building.

Sometimes, the school also has special motivational theme weeks. For example, during this Happy Week, bulletin board displays adorned the entrance outside of the main office. Moreover, music plays daily in the halls before and after school to enhance the climate.

### **Professional Community**

The focus group also asserted that teachers play a major role in the success of rainbow High School. Modeling good behavior and employing creativity, the teachers work well with their students. "They want student success; they want the school to be successful." Still another respondent vehemently expressed, "We have got teachers who give and give and give! The teachers are goal-oriented themselves; they want to do their best and bring out the best in their students." Another participant described the teachers as risk takers who are willing to try different things, all with the goal of making sure students have what they need. For example, the math department collaborated as a team to have an after-school remediation program for some students who were at risk of failing mathematics Standards of Learning tests. The students rotated from one mathematics teacher to another to review SOL topics. Therefore, she attributed a major portion of the success of the school to a staff that works together. Giving credit to staff that have invested an inordinate amount of time into making the school a Blue Ribbon School, one teacher commented:

I think some people have stepped up to be leaders, like for the Blue Ribbon Award.

There were some people that took that on, did the essays, and did all the grunt work for that. Therefore, there have been some individual teachers who have stepped up to get the school recognized and to give it a sense of accomplishment.

Two focus group respondents also attributed the success of the school to the teachers and the whole school community working together. Assuming an active role in the school, parents

are extremely supportive of Rainbow High School. Teacher and parents collaborate on various committees, including the School Improvement Team.

During the semi-structured interviews, respondents noted that here is a “wonderful change” in the communication between the administration and the staff. As one interviewee expressed, “[Mr. P, the principal,] has an open door policy. You can come in at any time. He’s a good listener, and he writes down what you tell him. He does not just say, ‘Okay.’ He writes it down.” Moreover, the principal is proactive by discussing any concerns at teacher coffees. As a result, the faculty and staff have seen how their input is highly regarded by Mr. P and the other administrators. Therefore, the “biggest success” comes from everyone collaborating and communicating with each other.

Teachers and students also collaborate well. Overall, the students exhibit hard work, dedication, and their respect, and their willingness to work with everyone. Students are expected to communicate with teachers first if they have a concern before they discuss the concern at a higher level. In this way, teachers and students not only resolve problems but also build relationships.

While interviewing Mr. P, the researcher observed that he is an effective principal who is very modest. Recognizing that it takes the entire staff, students, and the community to make a school successful, he prefers facilitating the efforts of the staff, students, and the community rather than persuading individuals, committees, or departments accept his ideas only. Therefore, he builds school capacity by providing resources and opportunities for growth. For instance, satisfying the criteria to become a Blue Ribbon School was a mammoth responsibility. However, instead of controlling the project himself, he facilitated the work of those who did the ‘lion’s share’ of this project. Furthermore, at the beginning and at the end of the school year,

departments set goals that the administration reviews. In addition, Mr. P disseminates data or information pertaining to instructional issues and school events.

Mrs. A also facilitates the collective efforts of the school. During her interview, the researcher noted that Mrs. A monitors the implementation of the School Improvement Plan. Furthermore, she involved others in a post-SOL survey. For example, she disseminated the results of a post-SOL survey that was distributed after the administration of the SOL test. Willingly accepting collective responsibility for analyzing the results, the statistics teacher's class tallied the data and created graphs.

**Research Question Three: What factors do experienced educators identify with hindering the successful implementation of site-based management?**

To answer question three, qualitative data collected from a focus group and semi-structured interviews were examined for frequency of recurring responses. These recurring responses were categorized into the theme, challenges (see Table 18).

**Table 18**

**Data Sources Relative to Challenges**

Theme	Keywords/Descriptors	Focus Group	Interviews
Challenges	• Procuring sufficient funding	•	•
	• Allocating time for some projects and state-mandated assessments		•
	• Troubleshooting technology	•	•

## **Results from the Focus Group and Interviews**

### **Funding**

In response to what barriers or challenges that impeded the success of the school, the focus group agreed that the major barrier is economic – budget restraints that affect procuring needed materials to implement teaching. Moreover, the budget affects staffing, causing a ripple effect of larger class sizes, which sometimes may diminish teacher effectiveness. Interviewees also expressed similar thoughts as the focus group relative to barriers. They felt that funding is a challenge impacting class sizes, programs, and technology. Because of lack of funding, class sizes are larger than usual. In addition, lack of funding can impact after-school tutorial programs for students. Because lack of county funding or insufficient buses to transport students who needed rides home, many students who needed the extra instructional time could not avail themselves of this opportunity. Moreover, lack of funding affects teachers who would use new software if they had a computer to use. Also, funding is not available to purchase equipment to use the multimedia materials accompanying new textbooks. Furthermore, lack of funding impacted the re-assignment of building technology coordinators. Therefore, if computers malfunction, the previously assigned county technician is no longer housed in the building for troubleshooting

During their interviews, Mr. P and Mrs. A related that insufficient funding is a considerable barrier or challenge each year to improving programs or implementing projects at Rainbow High School. In addition, funding has an impact on staffing needs. With additional funding, this school could do more with smaller class sizes and instructional staff to individualize instruction. Also, the seven-period alternating block schedule, which works with



odd and even days, does not lend itself to optimal teaching and learning. Basically, these things are obstacles in trying to improve SOL's.

### Time

Having enough time to work on projects during the school day also presents a challenge sometimes. For instance, the school is in the process of updating the theater, needing to buy and install new carpet. However, the theater is in constant use, including the community using it. Another challenge that interviewees discussed that is external to their school involved Standards of Learning tests, which they could not control. There is "an enormous amount of time allocated to standardized testing" for which teachers must prepare students. Too often students are being prepared to pass the test while teachers drill facts instead of teaching students to think critically and creatively. Teachers feel as though they are told how to teach and when to teach because they must cover a county pacing chart. This lack of creativity in the classroom may have stifled some teachers. Therefore, one of the major challenges is to "continue to be creative and follow the timeline of the SOL's so that teachers feel as though they are able to teach and be creative and not just follow a standard script." As one interviewee observed, "Part of the problem is communication, all the way trickling down from the state department of education to the people who have to make it happen in the building." For example, the school did not receive enough advanced notice of the expedited re-take SOL tests.

### Technology

In addition to funding and time, there is no longer an in-house technology coordinator to troubleshoot problems. To implement technology, including training, a technology coordinator was assigned to a school building. However, during the downsizing of technology coordinators, schools must seek the assistance of county curriculum integrators for training and technicians for

repairs. Hence, “the burden of troubleshooting technology has fallen on other people’s shoulders [at the school level].” Even though the county probably had a good reason for taking the technology coordinator out of the school, there is no “just-in-time technology help, so when something happens or there is a shutdown,” the waiting period for assistance is too long. Eventually, the lack of technological assistance impacts other areas throughout the school.

## Chapter 5

### Summary, Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

This chapter presents a summary and discussion of the findings that includes related research on site-based management and school improvement. In addition, this chapter discusses implications for practice and recommendations for future research.

#### Summary of Findings from the Questionnaire

Data for the first research question, *What are the perceptions of experienced teachers toward the key aspects of site-based management (shared decision making, school climate, and student success)?*, were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The major findings for each of the sub-scales for question one and for the ANOVA, which compared the means of the sub-scales grouped by the experience of the participants, are summarized in the following paragraphs.

#### Shared Decision Making

An analysis of the quantitative data from the survey indicated that the participants' responded favorably (strongly agree or somewhat agree) to the 14 items comprising the shared decision-making sub-scale. Although there was little variability across the 14 items, 100% of the respondents reported that they (1) had input developing the mission of their school, (2) helped develop the school improvement plan, and (3) desire to continue to share in decision making relative to their school. In addition, the major findings summarized below further indicate that the administration has developed a participatory leadership style:

1. Almost one half of the experienced teachers (47.2%) strongly agreed, and 51.4% somewhat agreed that teachers and the administration share the school vision, resulting in a 98.6% favorable response.

2. A majority of the experienced teachers (66.2%) strongly agreed, and 32.4% somewhat agreed that the administration encourages the faculty to design and implement programs to improve the school overall, resulting in a 98.6% favorable response.

3. The majority of the experienced teachers (73.0%) strongly agreed, and 24.3% somewhat agreed that the administration shares necessary information with the faculty and staff, resulting in a 97.3% favorable response.

4. The majority of the experienced teachers (58.1%) strongly agreed, and 39.2% somewhat agreed that shared decision making has led to school improvement in their school, resulting in a 97.3% favorable response.

5. The majority of the experienced teachers (55.4%) strongly agreed, and 41.9% somewhat agreed that there are opportunities for faculty members to assume the role of a leader, resulting in a 97.3% favorable response.

6. The majority of the experienced teachers (50.0%) strongly agreed, and 43.2% somewhat agreed that the administration seeks teachers' viewpoints on school issues, resulting in a 93.2% favorable response.

7. The majority of the experienced teachers (51.3%) strongly, and 41.9% somewhat agreed that the administration allots adequate time for making decisions leading to school improvement, resulting in a 93.2% favorable response.

As mentioned previously, there was very little variability among the responses to the sub-scale. With the exception of items receiving a 100% consensus, the other total percentages indicating favorable responses ranged from 93.2% to 98.6%. Of these percentages, 97.3% was the most frequent rating.

### **School Climate**

**An analysis of the quantitative data from the survey indicated that the participants' responded favorably (strongly agree or somewhat agree) to the 14 items comprising the school climate sub-scale. Although there was little variability across the 14 items, 100% of the respondents reported that (1) colleagues share ideas with each other, (2) a positive feeling permeates their school, (3) the school celebrates its successes when milestones are accomplished, and (4) staff members and students are recognized for their accomplishments and contributions. In addition, the major findings summarized below further indicate that the administration, faculty, staff, and students are committed to enhancing the school climate.**

**1. The majority of experienced teachers (70.3%) strongly agreed, and 28.3% somewhat agreed that there is an emphasis on continuous high achievement by students and teachers, resulting in a 98.6% favorable response.**

**2. The majority of experienced teachers (67.5%) strongly agreed, and 31.1% somewhat agreed that the faculty, staff, and students feel safe at school, resulting in a 98.6% favorable response.**

**3. The majority of experienced teachers (63.5%) strongly agreed, and 35.1% somewhat agreed that the classroom is generally conducive to learning, resulting in a 98.6% favorable response.**

**4. The majority of experienced teachers (64.9%) strongly agreed, and 32.4% somewhat agreed that there is honest, open communication among colleagues, resulting in a 97.3% favorable response.**

5. The majority of experienced teachers (71.6%) strongly agreed, and 25.7% somewhat agreed that they have professional opportunities to develop skills, resulting in a 97.3% favorable response.

6. The majority of experienced teachers (58.1%) strongly agreed, and 37.8% somewhat agreed that employees treat each other with respect and dignity, resulting in a 95.9% favorable response.

As mentioned previously, there was very little variability among the responses to the sub-scale. With the exception of four items receiving a 100% consensus, the other total percentages indicating favorable responses ranged from 97.2% to 98.0%. Of these responses, 98.0% was the most frequent rating.

### **Student Success**

An analysis of the quantitative data from the survey indicated that the participants responded favorably (strongly agree or somewhat agree) to the 17 items comprising the student success sub-scale. Although there was little variability across the 17 items, 100% of the respondents reported that (1) students participate in a variety of extracurricular activities, (2) there is an emphasis and creativity in fine arts, and (3) upon graduation, a high percentage of students enroll in a college or university or vocational school as their post-secondary choices. In addition, the findings reveal other very positive responses as summarized below.

1. The majority of the experienced teachers (51.3%) strongly agreed, and 47.3% somewhat agreed that students have developed an understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity, resulting in a 98.6 % favorable response.

2. The majority of the experienced teachers (50.0%) strongly agreed, and 48.6% somewhat agreed that teachers utilize a wide variety of methods to assess student performance, resulting in a 98.6% favorable response.

3. The majority of the experienced teachers (54.0%) strongly agreed, and 44.6% somewhat agreed that teachers accept collective responsibility for student achievement, resulting in a 98.6% favorable response.

4. The majority of the experienced teachers (54.0%) strongly agreed, and 44.6% somewhat agreed that instructional strategies actively involve students in their learning, resulting in a 98.6% favorable response.

5. The majority of the experienced teachers (56.8%) strongly agreed, and 41.8% somewhat agreed that teachers contact parents on a regular basis to meet students' needs, resulting in 98.6% favorable response.

6. The majority of experienced teachers (67.5%) strongly agreed, and 31.1% somewhat agreed that homework is assigned on a regular basis, resulting in a 98.6% favorable response.

7. The majority the experienced teachers (56.8%) strongly agreed, and 40.5% somewhat agreed that students provide services for the school and community, resulting in a 97.3% favorable response.

8. The majority of the experienced teachers (71.6%) strongly agreed, and 25.6% somewhat agreed that their school has high expectations, resulting in a 97.2% favorable response.

As mentioned previously, there was very little variability among the responses to the sub-scale. With the exception of items receiving a 100% consensus, the other total percentages

indicating favorable responses ranged from 97.2% to 98.0 %. Of these responses, 98.6% was the most frequent rating.

### **ANOVA**

An ANOVA was used to compare the means of the responses of three groups of experienced teachers to the three sub-scales, shared decision making, school climate, and student success. The data revealed that the respective F-ratios of .024, .271, and 1.18 did not exceed or far exceed 1, which is the approximate variability expected by chance. Further, the  $p$  value of each sub-scale was compared with a degree of significance set at the  $p < .05$  level. The results for the school climate, shared decision making, and student success sub-scales indicated a  $p$  value of .976, .764, and .314, respectively. Since  $p > .05$ , the means of the three groups were determined not to be significantly different.

### **Summary of Findings from the Focus Group and Interviews**

**Research Question Two: What factors do experienced educators identify with promoting the successful implementation of site-based management components (shared decision making, school climate, and student success)?**

To answer question two, the researcher used a focus group and semi-structured interviews as data sources. Based on a content analysis of the frequency of recurring responses from the focus group data and the interview data regarding factors that respondents attributed to the success of their school, four themes emerged: (1) leadership, (2) shared decision making, (3) school climate, and (4) professional community. The major findings for question two are summarized for each of these themes as follows:



## **Leadership**

Findings from both the focus group and the interviewees indicate that Rainbow High School has strong administrative leadership. Reportedly, the administrative team shared the school vision, mission, and clear goals, and set the direction for improvement with the input of the faculty, students, parents, and other community members. In this manner, the stakeholders have a vested ownership in the success of the school. In addition, with the collaboration of stakeholders, the administrators have developed a school improvement plan based on the school's strengths and weaknesses, especially an emphasis on student achievement.

Furthermore, they have set high expectations for teachers, students, and themselves, resulting in a positive change in students' attitudes toward their work and teachers' professionalism. The focus group and teacher interviewees also reported that the administration respects and supports their efforts, and they respect him. Furthermore, implementing an open-door policy, the principal is accessible to the faculty and staff, as well as to students, parents, and other community members. To provide more accessibility, the principal schedules "coffees" at school to address teacher concerns or to listen to ideas to improve the school, as well as hosts "coffees" in the neighborhoods. Therefore, the principal recognizes the importance of effective human relations skills.

From the principal's interview data and the teacher interview responses, the researcher characterized the principal as a facilitative leader. Facilitating and collaborating, he encourages teacher and student involvement in making the school successful. For example, because of his facilitative leadership, the school passed all its Standards of Learning tests, although he modestly attributes the success of the school to the staff and students. Additionally, as he expressed,

achieving recognition as a Blue Ribbon School and maintaining this status require the assiduity of administrators, teachers, and support staff.

### **Shared Decision Making**

The findings indicate that shared decision making is the norm at this school. According to both the focus group and the interviewees, the principal involves stakeholders in making decisions. Collaborating in an effort to improve the school, the principal involves stakeholders in working on research projects [or subcommittees]. For instance, stakeholders were involved in developing the school improvement plan. Recognizing that success requires teamwork, the principal facilitated the work of this newly Blue Ribbon School and delegated responsibility for those interested in participating in this project. If a concern is localized to a specific department, usually the department chairperson consults with the assistant principal who supervises that department to derive a solution. Additionally, department members make decisions with the chairperson seeking their input for departmental decisions or for school-wide decisions. The principal also shares decision-making authority with the Principal advisory Committee (PAC), comprised of chairpersons and support persons, such as guidance counselors, the athletic director, and the psychologist. This committee meets bimonthly with the principal and discusses concerns and major issues that will impact departments or the entire school. Moreover, the principal hosts monthly “coffees” for teachers during planning periods and in the neighborhoods to address concerns or issues and to share ideas influencing decision making. Additionally, one interviewee indicated that students participate in the decision making through forums and clubs.

### **School Climate**

Both the focus group and the interviewees reported that the school climate contributes to the success of their school. In this positive environment, the faculty and staff and students are

appreciated and recognized for their accomplishments. The focus group indicated that the principal appreciates and recognizes their accomplishments by writing notes to the faculty and staff. Additionally, interviewees indicated that the principal also recognizes students' accomplishments by writing notes to them and giving them M & M's. Such recognition makes students feel appreciated, respected, and valued.

The findings also indicate that the school environment is clean and safe. Comparing their building with others, students noticed that Rainbow is much cleaner. Although the population of students is diverse, they get along well with each other, regardless of their ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. As a result, they feel safe physically. In addition, they feel emotionally safe in the hallways as well in the classrooms, where they can respond to questions without being ridiculed.

The atmosphere of the school is also conducive to learning and working. Teachers expect students to perform well and engage them in well-prepared and meaningful lessons. Furthermore, students feel comfortable as they relate to their teachers and as they answer questions in the classrooms where they can respond without being ridiculed. Besides being conducive to learning, the atmosphere is conducive to working. Focus group and interview respondents reported that they are treated like professionals. There is a good feeling of pride working at this school. People like working here because the atmosphere is warm. Moreover, the administration and teachers respect and value each other and collaborate well with each other.

### **Professional Community**

The focus group findings indicate that teachers at Rainbow High school play a major role in the success of their school. Accepting collective responsibility for the success of all students,

teachers responded positively to collaborating and communicating with each other to address school improvement issues, especially teaching and learning. Moreover, the teachers of this school are role models and risk takers who are willing to use different strategies to fructify success for students. Focusing on their students' learning and other needs, teachers also work well with students to attain learning goals, expecting the "best." In addition to teachers collaborating school-wide, they invest their time to provide tutoring assistance or tutoring programs after school. They also invest time to serve on various school committees, including the School Improvement Team. Furthermore, as a professional community, this school evolved into a Blue Ribbon School.

Paralleling the findings of the focus group, the findings of the interviews further reinforced that teachers and the administration accept collective responsibility for school improvement. Recognizing that school improvement requires teamwork, the building administrators utilize the faculty and staff as a professional resource and provide opportunities for teachers to assume leadership roles. Additionally, they serve on different committees to procure school goals, without fear of the administration vetoing their decisions. Instead, the administration further builds and maintains an efficacious professional community by providing resources and information needed for school improvement. Moreover, exhibiting collegiality, this professional community shares a vision, mission, and goals that provide direction for school improvement.

**Research Question Three: What factors do experienced educators identify with hindering the successful implementation of site-based management (shared decision making, school climate, and student success)?**

Based on a content analysis of the frequency of recurring responses from the focus group data and the interview data, challenges emerged as a theme or category for the following: (1) funding, (2) time, and (3) technology.

### **Funding**

Based on the focus group's responses and interview data, this research found that funding is a major barrier. Budget restraints affect staffing, causing a ripple effect of larger class sizes, which sometimes may impact teacher effectiveness. Also, funding is a considerable barrier to improving programs or implementing projects. For instance, funding affects after-school tutorial programs for which students need county transportation because many parents are unable to pick their children up after-school hours. Although multimedia materials accompany some textbooks, teachers would use these software ancillaries if they had more computers or other needed hardware.

### **Time**

This research found that having enough time during the school day to work on projects can present a challenge sometimes. However, this research also found that most of the challenges involving allotting time for this school are external. Instead of teaching students to think critically and creatively, there is an inordinate amount of time allocated to drilling facts so that students will pass the Standards of Learning tests. Supposedly, the timeline of the county pacing charts does not allow for as much creativity as teachers desired. Furthermore, the testing window for the SOL's consumes a great deal of time. Additionally, interviewees reported that they did not receive enough advance notice about the expedited re-take SOL tests.

## **Technology**

Being able to use technology in the classroom on a regular basis is a challenge. As a result of downsizing, this county re-assigned building technology coordinators and eliminated the position of some. Hence, there is no longer an in-house technology coordinator to troubleshoot problems as quickly as some situations require. Sometimes, this lack of “just-in-time” technology assistance creates problems with lessons involving technology not being taught. Also, if a system shuts down, the waiting period for assistance is too long. Eventually, other areas in the school are affected. Furthermore, training needs sometimes are not met in a timely fashion, even though there are technology integrators in the county that will schedule training for schools. On the other hand, when the technology coordinator was in the building, that person provided training for an individual or for groups.

## **Discussion of the Findings**

This section compares the major findings of the present study with other recent research on site-based management and school improvement. Below is a comparison of the following areas of study: (1) leadership, (2) shared decision making, (3) school climate, and (4) professional community.

### **Leadership**

Based on quantitative and qualitative responses in this study, the findings reveal that effective administrative leadership is essential to school improvement. More specifically, the study found that the administration’s behaviors, such as the following, contributed to the improvement of the school: (1) articulating and implementing a collective vision, mission, and school improvement plan; (2) setting high expectations with an emphasis on student achievement; (3) developing positive relationships with the staff, students, parents, and the local

community; (4) providing opportunities for teachers' growth and development; and (5) being accessible. The major findings relative to effective leadership in this study are consistent with the research on effective leadership (Blase & Blase, 2000; Bogler, 1999; Delaney, 1997; ECS, 2002; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999). In their study of the most effective leadership behaviors, Day, Harris, and Hadfield (2001) concluded that an emphasis on values, high expectations, and individualized support are essential indicators of effective leadership. Reviewing the work of other researchers on instructional leadership, McEwan (1998) delineated seven steps to effective instructional leadership that are also consistent with the findings of the present study:

1. Set clear instructional goals;
2. Be accessible for the staff;
3. Create a school culture and climate conducive to learning;
4. Communicate the vision and mission of the school;
5. Set high expectations for the staff;
6. Provide opportunities to develop teacher leaders; and
7. Maintain positive relationships with the staff, students, and parents;

Comparatively, the work of Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999) supports the present study. They concluded that effective leadership in the twenty-first century may be categorized as follows:

1. Setting directions (includes vision building, goal consensus and development of high-performance expectations);
2. Developing people (includes the provision of individualized support, intellectual stimulation and the modeling of values and practices important to the mission of the

school);

4. Organizing (culture building in which colleagues are motivated by moral imperatives and structuring, fostering decision-making processes and problem-solving capacities; and
5. Building relationships with the school community. (p. 39)

### **Shared Decision Making**

The responses to the questionnaire items comprising the shared decision-making sub-scale, from the focus group, and from the interviews indicated that the faculty, students, parents, and other community members are involved in shared decision making. Recognizing that the primary goal of shared decision making is to improve student achievement, the principal expands his power by sharing it with stakeholders. In addition, the findings of this study indicate that shared decision making has led to school improvement, including higher standardized test scores and national recognition as a Blue Ribbon School. Although there have not been many studies conducted on the link between site-based management and school improvement, especially student achievement, researchers are beginning to examine this relationship, and some have reported positive results (Holloway, 2000; Lee & Smith, 2001; Reed, 2000; Vincent & Johnson, 2000; Wohlsetter, Kirk, Robertson, & Mohrman, 1997). In addition, Smylie, Lazarus, and Brownlee-Conyers (1996) conducted a five-year longitudinal study of six schools in Chicago and found that teachers participating in shared decision making in SBM schools related positively to instructional improvement and to student academic performance. Furthermore, the study of Bry, Thum, Easton, and Luppescu (1998), conducted through the Chicago Consortium on School Reform (CCSR), reported increased student achievement, as well as Hess' study (1999).



In contrast to the findings of the present study, some researchers have found that the link between site-based management and student achievement is problematic. Studying the impact of site-based decision-making strategies and methods on student achievement in high schools, Everett (1998) investigated the degree to which SBM strategies and methods impacted percentile scores measured by the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TASS), which comprises three examinations – reading, writing, and math. Based on the site-based committee member responses, she categorized the schools into one of three SBM categories: low-level, moderate-level, and high-level management. Her findings indicated that there was no significant difference among the three levels of SBM and the three areas of focus on the TASS. As a result of their study, O’Connell and Yadergari (1996) asserted the following conclusion about the efficacy of shared decision-making teams:

There is little solid evidence in the research literature to support that the use of a participatory decision-making process leads to increased student performance. It may be, however, that for most schools the SBM approach is still only in its beginning stages. Attempts to gather quantitative data on student performance may, at this early phase, yield little in terms of concrete evidence. Still, if SDM teams are addressing issues that might potentially impact the area of student achievement, it is not clear that schools with SDM teams have done so consistently, or that they have attempted to implement a measure of the impact their decisions have had on student achievement. (p. 9)

Moreover, in her study, Bell (1996) substantiated evidence that the effect of site-based management on standardized test scores warrants further investigation. After conducting a study of 35 elementary schools over a period of three years, she concluded that the socioeconomic status of the students contributed the most to the variations among the scores. An analysis of the

data indicated a decrease of test scores in 18 of the sample schools and an increase of scores in 13 scores. The scores of the remaining schools did not change.

### **School Climate**

The questionnaire, focus group, and interview responses indicated that school climate affects positive relationships which impact increased learning and working conditions.

Enhancing the school climate, teachers and principals are honest with each other, as well as supportive, receptive to the ideas of each other, and attentive to the needs of the school.

Additionally, mutual respect pervades the school, and staff members exhibit genuine caring for each other. Research has documented that a positive climate facilitates collegiality as colleagues share resources and information (Bennett, 1998). Moreover, the literature supports the significance of appreciating and recognizing accomplishments, although monetary recognition is not the norm (Guskey & Peterson, 1996; Hannay & Ross, 1997; Wohlsetter et. al, 1997).

Similar to findings in the present study, Kaplan and Owings (2000) asserted that students perform their best when the school addresses their developmental needs for a safe and learning climate as summarized below:

1. Feel safe, both physically and emotionally;
2. Believe they belong to a valued group;
3. Experience the status and respect associated with social, academic, or cocurricular success;
4. Have opportunities to learn and participate in meaningful activities that have a positive impact on the real world;
6. Be encouraged to gain a better understanding of themselves by extending their thinking about events;

7. Establish rapport with caring adult role models to help them find an answer to major life questions; and
8. Actively engage in learning that is interesting, valuable, and relevant.

Still other recent researchers have supported that positive relationships among students and teachers improved student performance (Kelly, Brown, Bulter, Glittens, Taylor, & Zeller, 1998; Lee & Smith, 2001; Reed, 2000; Wohlsetter, Kirk, & Mohrman, 1997). As a result of such positive classroom atmosphere, students increased their commitment to learn and improved the quality of their school assignments and activities. In their study of successful high schools, Murphy, Beck, Crawford, Hodges, and McGaughy (2001) described a positive climate as one that welcomes and includes students. According to their findings, inclusive schools foster students feeling as though they have membership in their school and encourage them to participate in the life of activities of the school. Adults also exhibited pervasive caring for students, set high expectations and nurtured students' personal and academic growth, engaged students in schoolwork relevant to students' lives, provided opportunities for peer interactions through shared experiences, and appreciated multicultural diversity.

### **Professional Community**

Findings from this study's focus group and interviews reveal that the faculty and administration collaborate as a professional community, assuming collective responsibility for school improvement, including student achievement. Studies have shown that teachers assuming an active role in professional communities that shared collective responsibility for all students' learning helped their school improve (Fiore, 2001; Lee & Smith, 2001). According to other research, professional communities not only develop collegiality but also fortify their strength to

enhance instructional goals (Newmann & Wehlage, 1996; Mark & Louis, 1997). Newmann and Wehlage's (1995) definition describes the professional community of this school:

1. Teachers share a clear purpose for all students' learning;
2. Teachers collaborate activity to achieve the purpose;
3. Teachers take collective responsibility for student learning;
4. Teachers communicate to students that they are expected to work hard to master challenging academic material;
5. Teachers and peers have confidence that, in the long run, students will be successful if they work hard on academic tasks; and
6. Teachers help and support students through individual teaching and by establishing classroom norms by which learning is taken seriously, peers are expected to help one another, and to try again without being judged stupid. (pp. 31-32)

In addition, Bulach, Boothe, and Michael (1999) concluded the following regarding professional communities:

It is important that schools become places where teachers are engaged in school reform or renewal efforts for improving the schools and where supervisory support encourages the entire staff to model behaviors that foster collegiality and a professional environment.

The issue of teachers as a part of these professional communities must be addressed by [those] who wish to improve their supervisory skill in building a more supportive climate for helping teachers reach their full potential. (p. 14)

Table 19 presents a synthesis of recent research that supports the major findings pertaining to question two in the present study.

Table 19

**Related Recent Research Supporting Major Findings Relative to School Success**

Authors	Leadership	Shared Decision Making	School Climate	Professional Community
Bennett, 1998			•	
Blase & Blasé, 2000	•			
Bogler, 1999	•			
Bry, Thum, Easton, & Luppescu, 1998		•		
Bulach, Boothe, & Michael, 1999				•
Day, Harris, & Hadfield (2001)	•			
Delaney, 1997	•			
ECS, 2001	•			
Fiore, 2001				•
Guskey & Peterson, 1996			•	
Hannay & Ross, 1997			•	
Hess, 1999		•		
Holloway, 2000		•		
Kaplin & Owings (2000)			•	
Kelly, Brown, Butler, Glittens, Taylor, & Zeller, 1998			•	
Lee & Smith, 2001		•		•
Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1998	•			
Mark & Louis, 1997				•
McEwan, 1998	•			
Murphy, Beck, Crawford, Hodges, & McGaughy, 2001			•	
Newmann & Wehlage, 1996				•
Reed, 2000		•		
Symylye, Lazarus, & Brownlee-Conyers, 1996		•		
Vincent & Johnson, 2000		•		
Wohlsetter, Kirk, Robertson, & Mohrman, 1997		•		

**Barriers**

This section compares the findings of this research to those in current literature. Below is a comparison of the following barriers: (1) time, (2) funding, and (3) technology.

## **Time**

The findings relative to time in the present research are congruent with current research. Although participation in site-based management practices provides significant potential for increased student achievement (Holloway, 2000), improved job satisfaction (Whitaker, Whitaker, & Lumpa, 2000), and greater commitment to achieve goals (Reed, 2000), such participation expends significant quantities of time which is a precious resource in education. According to current research, providing adequate time to plan for school improvement continues to present a challenge to educators (Clemmons, 2000; Smith, 1995; Sykes, 1999). Additionally, time is needed so that the school can work collectively as a professional community during the school day. Further, a study conducted by Battcher (1999) also found that the element of time may relate to problems of potential stress. She asserted the following conclusion:

The issue of time is related to problems of stress. As curriculum, assessments, pedagogies, and governance change, time is necessary to adjust and learn about these new elements. In our rush to reform education, we layer demands on teachers without adequate time to internalize these changes and plan for implementation. The pressure that accompanies accountability has shortened the period in which we can accomplish all that is asked of educators today. As teachers grow into their new role as curriculum leaders and facilitators of learning, site-based management also makes demands on their busy schedules. (p. 74)

## **Funding**

Although Rainbow High has evolved into a Blue Ribbon School, maintaining that success is a challenge because funding hinders the potential success of this school. Cotton

(1992) substantiates that a lack of adequate financial resources is a frequent obstacle hindering school-based management efforts, resulting in insufficient resources to implement goals, programs, activities, or plans. As she concluded, "At worst, these constraints can lead school personnel to view school-based management as unreal – the 'same old thing' in the guise of an innovation" (p. 10). She further asserted that school-based management becomes a political or superficial attempt to improve the school when districts fail to provide adequate financial resources to implement decisions. In his study of barriers to the implementation of site-based management, Smith (1995) concluded that time was a serious barrier. Instructionally, funding was not available to implement new instructional programs that were planned as a result of SBM decisions. Furthermore, respondents frequently cited insufficient funds to purchase materials and supplies created a problem. Still other researchers have argued that districts should rethink their budget allocations because lack of funding hinders restructuring efforts to design programs and to implement innovative instructional approaches (Hawley-Miles & Darling-Hammond, L., 1998; Odden & Archibald, 2000; Wagoner, 1995).

### Technology

Data collected from the focus group and interviews indicated that technology has the potential to hinder the success of integrating technology into the classroom. Respondents noted that they needed more hardware, as well as "jut-in-time" technical assistance which the school division afforded before restructuring technology positions. Although technology has become an integral part of teaching and learning in American schools, most school divisions plan their budgets to include technology funding for hardware and software and to purchase as much technical equipment as possible. As Means (2000/2001) related, "we still fall short of providing a seamless, convenient, robust, and reliable technology support structure for all teachers and

students” (p. 57). To assist teachers in integrating the hardware and software into the classroom, many school systems have hired technology specialists and building technology coordinators (Becker, 1998). In addition, Polonoli (2001) has found that the one-on-one mentoring relationship formed between the teacher and integration expert is the most effective form of staff development. According to Polonoli, “mentoring allows faculty members to work on their own computers; solicit answers to software questions and integration problems that they deem personally important; and ask questions without the fear of embarrassment, which is more likely in a group situation” (p. 38).

Table 20 presents a synthesis of recent research that supports the major findings of the present study pertaining to barriers to SBM.

Table 20

**Recent Research Addressing Barriers to SBM**

Author	Time	Funding	Technology
Battcher, 1999	•		
Becker, 1998			•
Clemmons, 2000	•		
Cotton, 1992		•	
Hawley-Miles, & Darling-Hammond, 1998		•	
Holloway, 2000	•		
Means, 2000/2001		•	•
Odden & Archibald, 2000		•	
Polonoli, 2001			•
Reed, 2000	•		
Smith, 1995	•		
Sykes, 1999	•		
Wagoner, 1995		•	
Whitaker, Whitaker, & Lumpa, 2000	•		



### **Evidence That Site-based Management Practices Can Work**

In order for site-based management to work, researchers have indicated that schools must have authority over the budget, curriculum, and instruction (Wohlsetter & Mohrman, 1996; Smith 1995). Although Rainbow High School has less decentralized control over its budget, the curriculum, and instruction, the implementation of some elements of SBM yielded success: structure, teacher empowerment, collaborative principal leadership, trust, and professional community.

#### **Structure**

In the present study, the administration provided structure for improving school performance by focusing the faculty and staff on a unifying vision, mission, school improvement plan, and curriculum guidelines. The development of the vision, mission, and the school improvement plan involved the joint efforts of the faculty and the administration. Developed around the strengths and weaknesses of the school, the school improvement plan provides direction for school goals and includes strategies, activities, and a monitoring plan to achieve the goals. The Virginia Standards of Learning, county curricula, and SOL pacing guides also set parameters for instructional direction. In their study of successful SBM schools, Wohlsetter, Robertson, and Mohrman (1997) distinguished successful SBM schools from struggling schools, reporting that SBM worked in schools that adopted a shared vision and mission related to curriculum and instruction which drove reform efforts. Most of the SBM schools also implemented curricular guidelines developed at the district, state, and/or national (e.g., National Council of Teachers of Mathematics) level. Research conducted by Clemmons (2000) indicated that the lack of a collective vision for educational goals and objectives negatively impacted school improvement and student achievement.

### **Teacher Empowerment**

Recognizing that teachers are at the delivery level of instruction, the administration at this studied school empowered teachers to use their professional judgment to make decisions for improving student performance. Based on student data, each department set instructional goals which the administration planned to review at the beginning and at the end of the year. In addition to departments empowered to address departmental and school goals, they exercised professional expertise to address student emerging needs and derived solutions. For example, some mathematics teachers designed an after-school Standards of Learning (SOL) program for students who needed to improve their skills before the administration of the SOL test.

Depending on the scheduled topics, students rotated from one mathematics teacher to another for instruction. Moreover, the administration shared its power by empowering teachers to design and implement programs to improve the school overall. In a study of middle schools that made significant gains on Washington's state-mandated tests, Lake, McCarthy, Taggart, and Celio (2000) posited that teachers need reasonable empowerment to derive solutions for student achievement in their classrooms. Moreover, teachers in the Washington study committed themselves to focusing on school-wide goals. Unlike the teachers in the current study and in the Washington study, some teachers do not desire to be empowered because decision making is too time consuming (Battcher, 1999), or they are not held accountable for non-participation in decision making (Clemmons, 2000).

### **Collaborative Principal Leadership**

Stating that the success of a school involves more than one person, the principal in this study actively engaged the faculty and staff, students, parents, and other stakeholders in decision making. Furthermore, he nurtured leadership by providing opportunities for teachers to assume

the role of leaders. Additionally, the principal has an open door policy and welcomes input from faculty, staff, students, parents, and the community. He also hosted “coffees” at school and in the communities to listen to concerns and to solicit input relative improving the school. Employing a more formal process to discuss faculty concerns and input, the principal collaborates bimonthly with the Principal Advisory Council (PAC), which includes the administration and department chairpersons. Input from the PAC meetings are discussed in departments and in faculty meetings. Leithwood , Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999) found a strong relationship between principal leadership and teachers’ willingness to participate on, and satisfaction with their school council. From their research, Smylie, Lazarus, and Brownlee-Conyers (1996) found that teachers appear to be more willing to participate in decision making if they perceive their principal to be open, collaborative, and supportive. They also found schools in which principals actively collaborated with teachers experienced improved student academic outcomes. Conversely, schools lacking teacher participation and collaborative leadership experienced declines in student academic.

### Trust

There is an atmosphere of trust at this school. The principal, who is very knowledge, inspired trust in his capabilities to lead the school. Moreover, he trusted teachers to reach high expectations for continuous high achievement for students and for themselves. This professional trust motivated teachers to take risks to experiment with new ideas and programs to improve the school. Additionally, the students trusted the school personnel to keep them safe and their teachers to set high student expectations for performing well in the classroom. Bryk and Schneider (2003) reported their findings from a ten-year intensive case study of 400 Chicago elementary schools. They concluded that trust is a key resource for school reform. Schools that

scored low on the relational trust survey instrument experienced a decline in reading scores but their mathematics scores remained approximately the same. However, schools with chronically weak trust reports did not improve in reading or mathematics. On the hand, school with high relational trust made significant gains in reading and mathematics.

### **Professional Community**

Research has shown that schools organized as professional communities focused on student achievement have increased student performance (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Reyes, Scribner & Peredes-Scribner, 1999). In the present study, the principal enhanced the organizational capacity of the school, engaging teachers in a professional community. For example, the development of the School Improvement Plan was the joint effort of the administration and teachers. Furthermore, teachers assumed collective responsibility for all students' learning by dedicating themselves to deriving solutions. Viewing teachers as a resource for attaining school goals, the principal facilitated the work of subcommittees by sharing necessary information and by providing resources. According to findings in a study conducted by Tanner and Stone (1998), the distribution of information contributes to the success of SBM.

### **Evidence That School Change Is Important**

Rainbow emphasizes continuous high achievement for its students. The data enumerated highlights some of the success this school has experienced because of the focus on student success:

- The student dropout rate declined from 5.05% in 1996-1997 to 3.21% in 2001-2002.
- The daily average student attendance rate is 94.34%, which includes transfer students.

- Sixty-six percent of Rainbow's students attend four-year colleges, 19% attend two-year colleges, four percent seek other forms of continuing education, and 11% seek employment or military service
- The number of 9-12 students taking on 1 or more Advanced Placement courses increased from 3 in 1999-2000 to 261 in 2001-2002.
- The number of grade 9-12 students scoring 3 or better on at least 1 or more Advanced Placement tests increased from 3 in 1999-2000 to 62 in 2001-2002.
- Over the last three years, 100% of Rainbow's students completed their programs, acquiring either an advanced studies, a standard, or a special modified standard diploma.
- Rainbow has also experienced success in the arts with award-winning art, drama, and music departments.

#### **Improvement of Standards of Learning Test Scores**

Rainbow High School's primary academic focus is improving scores on the Standards of Learning (SOL) tests, which are criterion-referenced tests. On September 14, 1999, the Virginia Department of Education recognized Rainbow as one of the top twenty-five most improved high schools in the state on SOL scores. Since the administration of the SOL tests in 1998, Rainbow has procured a full accreditation status and has significantly increased its percent of students passing as indicated by the following gains over a period of 1998 to 2002, the four years with the present principal:

- Pass rate of 82% in 1998 on writing test to 95% in 2002
- Pass rate of 78% in 1998 on reading test to 96% in 2002
- Pass rate of 83% in 1998 on World History I test to 91% in 2002

- Pass rate of 50% in 1998 on World History II test to 85% in 2002
- Pass rate of 47% in 1998 on the United History test to 81% in 2002
- Pass rate of 76% in 1998 on the Earth Science test to 83% in 2002
- Pass rate of 77% in 1998 on the Biology test to 91% in 2002
- Pass rate of 45% in 1998 on the Chemistry test to 78% in 2002
- Pass rate of 15% in 1998 on the Algebra I test to 71% in 2002
- Pass rate of 44% in 1998 on the Geometry test to 76% in 2002
- Pass rate of 66% in 1998 on Algebra I I test to 76% in 2002

### **Blue Ribbon School**

As required by Chesterfield County, Rainbow High School developed a School Improvement Plan in compliance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools for accreditation purposes. To expand its self-evaluation process begun with the School Improvement Plan, Rainbow applied to the U.S. Department of Education for national recognition as a Blue Ribbon School. In order to be nominated as a Blue Ribbon School, school leaders must demonstrate strong leadership that fosters an effective collaborative relationship among all members of the school community. Additionally, the school climate should enhance the implementation of a challenging curriculum and high-quality instructional programs. Furthermore, there must be a strong commitment to educational excellence for all students. After submitting its application and meeting the following eight criteria of a Blue Ribbon School, Rainbow High School received state and national recognition as a Blue Ribbon School in 2000:

1. Student Focus and Support
2. School Organization and Culture

- 3. Challenging Standards and Curriculum**
- 4. Active Teaching and Learning**
- 5. Professional Community**
- 6. Leadership and Educational Vitality**
- 7. School, Family, and Community**
- 8. Indicators of Success**

### **Implications for Practice**

An effective site-based management program does not materialize overnight. Instead of abandoning reform efforts, educators should address inherent problems such as the decision-making process, the locus of control (Lashway, 1997), accountability (Lee & Smith, 2001), time (Clemmons, 2000), and training (McClosley, Minkow-Porto, & Bingham, 1998). Naturally, these problems may hinder student achievement. To diminish some of these problems, districts must gradually make a transition to such a program.

Collaborating with principals, teachers, parents, and other community members, districts need to derive a definition of site-based management, design a marketing plan for different stakeholders, develop a common language for communicating decision making, and plan in-service training. After shifting the locus of control to the principal or the site, central administrators must redefine their roles and trust principals and other stakeholders to make informed decisions.

Like central administrators, principals must also redefine their roles. Some principals may be apprehensive about empowering teachers to share in decision making. Some may even feel threatened because they fear losing their power. Nevertheless, principals must recognize that they must empower teachers, even to take risks associated with innovation (Holloway, 2000;

Reed, 2000). Conversely, since teachers have been discouraged for risk taking, the key to the principal's helping them become risk takers is to offer assistance without taking ownership of the tasks.

Educators must also realize that the allocation of time is a critical factor for a site-based management program. Principals and teachers need time during the day to collaborate on making decisions. For example, they need time to plan staff development activities, develop curricular materials, assess and profile students' strengths and weaknesses, develop practice tests for standardized testing, select textbooks and other materials, and design school improvement plans. This concept of allocating time during the day may meet with resistance from parents who believe that the teacher's role should be teaching their students. Another option for allocating time to teachers during the day, however, is the common planning time. It seems clear that districts and principals must allocate time to teachers more often during the day to avoid burnout.

Additionally, school districts need to recognize that little of teacher preservice training prepared teachers to design curriculum geared to students' needs. To enhance teachers' skills in curriculum development and instructional creativity, districts should collaborate with universities to tailor course work for staff development training. Also, districts should provide embedded staff development opportunities. Subsequently, the much-needed training may result in improved teacher and student productivity.

Since there are no educational blueprints for site-based management, districts must tailor their own programs, based on their needs and on the best practices of effective schools research. From the research, districts will discern that successful programs rest on the rationale that school autonomy and shared decision making undergird a site-based management program.



### **Recommendations for Future Research**

**The researcher recommends the following for future study:**

- 1. This research studied SBM practices at a single-site high school in one county. It is suggested that this study be replicated to include all high schools in the selected school district. In addition, replicating the study in the elementary and middle schools would further the knowledge of SBM and school improvement.**
- 2. Although researchers have begun to study the relationship of SBM and student achievement, there is a need to conduct more empirical research on the impact of SBM on student achievement.**
- 3. Advocates of site-based management espouse inclusion of parents in improving the school; however, very few studies have investigated the perceptions, roles, and impact of parents on SBM. Therefore, research should be conducted to ascertain the role of parents regarding SBM practices.**
- 4. Barriers to SBM can affect the success or failure of site-based management. Hence, more research should examine the effects of barriers to SBM on job satisfaction and teacher burnout.**
- 5. This research study found that facilitative leadership has a positive impact on the success of SBM and school improvement. Future research that investigates the success of SBM based on the principal's leadership style would be beneficial to the research base.**

### **Conclusion**

**Since the publication of A Nation at Risk (1983), which initiated an avalanche of reports and articles attacking the mediocrity of the public educational system, American education has constantly been in a state of restructuring to provide a quality education for all students. One**

such restructuring effort has been the focus on improving student achievement by using SBM to impact curriculum and instruction. Waters (1998) characterized this shift in recent restructuring efforts in the following thought-provoking assertion:

On the cusp of a new millennium, we are searching for answers not in the homes, economic backgrounds, and individual disadvantages of our students of public education. It would seem that we are finally beginning to look at the quality of instruction variables that exist in schooling processes instead of “blaming the victim.” Can we begin to ask why and how our school systems are failing our children, instead of why and how these children are failing our school systems? If schools are to be held accountable for equitable delivery of educational opportunities and if social justice is to take place within the halls of academic opportunity, the core of the education performance indicator systems should include school and classroom performance. (p. 5)

Continuing into the new millennium, SBM has proven to be successful, when used as an embedded strategy for improving school and classroom performance. Building and maintaining organizational capacity, principals must assume the role of guiding professional communities in collegial decision making that addresses strategies for teaching and learning to accommodate all students. In this manner, principals, teachers, and other stakeholders share a vision, mission, and school goals, with the primary goal of SBM focused on student achievement. As a result of such efforts, educators can provide a better quality education for all children, regardless of social or economic backgrounds.

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**Appendix A**  
**Correspondence**

**To:** [kwhittie@chesterfield.k12.va.us](mailto:kwhittie@chesterfield.k12.va.us)  
**From:** Ann Todd <[atodd@chesterfield.k12.va.us](mailto:atodd@chesterfield.k12.va.us)>  
**Subject:** Visitation on March 19, 2002

**Katie,**

As a Blue Ribbon School, Rainbow has surmounted many challenges in its quest for accelerated improvement. In my doctoral study on school improvement, I am investigating site-based management practices that have fructified or hindered the success of James River. To accomplish this goal, I need to collect data via a survey of perceptions of experienced teachers with at least three years of teaching. Moreover, I need to collect more data using a focus group comprised of the School Improvement Team, as you suggested.

**Appendix B**  
**Questionnaire**

## Inventory of Site-based Management Practices

The purpose of this questionnaire is to examine the perceptions of site-based management components and school improvement at your school. After responding to the survey, please place it inside the accompanying manila envelope. Please note that your responses will be anonymous.

**Part I:** Items in this section pertain to demographic information. Please select one response by either writing your response on the provided line or placing a check mark in the appropriate box.

- How many total years of teaching experience combined have you acquired at the end of the 2001-2002 school year? \_\_\_\_\_
- What is your gender?  
     Male ☐                      Female ☐
- What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_
- Which identifies your ethnic group?  
     ☐ White, not Hispanic                      ☐ Black, Not Hispanic                      ☐ Hispanic  
     ☐ Asian, Pacific Islander                      ☐ American Indian, Alaskan Native                      ☐ Other

**Part II:** Items 1-45 encompass site-based management components. Please indicate your perception by checking one response ranging from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree”.

		Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	There is honest, open communication among colleagues in this school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	There is collegial sharing of ideas in this school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Students have developed an understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	There is an emphasis on technology in this school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

		<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
5.	There are opportunities for faculty members to assume the role of a leader.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	There is an emphasis on continuous high achievement by students and employees at this school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	Teachers are encouraged to design and implement programs to improve the school overall.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	The development of the mission of the school was the joint efforts of teachers and administrators.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.	Discipline which warrants an office referral is decreasing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10.	Staff members feel free to express professional concerns without repercussions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11.	Students are involved in making decisions relevant to their school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12.	This school has high expectations for all students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13.	Teachers have professional opportunities to develop skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14.	Data and research drive decisions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15.	There is a low failure rate at this school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16.	Job productivity has increased in this school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17.	The faculty employs teaching strategies that require students to utilize higher-order thinking.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18.	Shared decision making has led to school improvement in this school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

		<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
19.	This school has a low teacher absentee rate. school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20.	Teachers help establish school policy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21.	Teachers utilize a wide variety of methods to assess student performance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22.	Teachers accept collective responsibility for student achievement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23.	The student dropout rate has decreased over the last three years.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24.	The faculty, staff, and students feel safe at school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25.	Teachers contact parents on a regular basis to meet students' needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26.	Students participate in a variety of extra- curricular activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27.	There is an emphasis on creativity and excellence in fine arts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28.	A positive feeling permeates this school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29.	Teachers helped develop a school improvement plan for this school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30.	This school celebrates its successes when milestones are accomplished.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31.	The administration facilitates decision making by sharing information for the faculty and staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
32.	Employees at this school treat each other with respect and dignity.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
33.	Upon graduation, a high percentage of students enroll in a college or university or a vocational school at their post-secondary choices.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
34.	Classroom atmosphere is generally conducive				

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
to learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
35. Students provide services for the school and community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
36. Instructional strategies actively involve students in their learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
37. Daily student attendance rates have increased over the last three years.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
38. Administrators seek teachers' viewpoints on school issues.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
39. Staff members and students are recognized for their accomplishments and contributions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
40. Adequate time is allotted for making decisions leading to school improvement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
41. Instructional strategies accommodate students' diverse learning styles.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
42. Teachers feel empowered to experiment with new ideas and techniques to improve the school overall.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
43. Teachers and administrators share the vision of the school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
44. Teachers desire to continue to share in decision making relating to their school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
45. Homework is assigned on a regular basis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



**Appendix C**  
**Focus Group Protocol**

## **Focus Group Protocol**

**The focus group protocol comprised the following questions:**

- 1. To what do you attribute the success this school has experienced over the last three or more years?**
- 2. What barriers or challenges have you experienced or observed related to this school's efforts to improve?**

**In addition to the key questions for the focus group, the researcher posed the following probing questions as applicable:**

- 1. What does shared decision making mean to you?**
- 2. What is the decision-making process in this school?**
- 7. In what ways does teacher involvement in shared decision help improve student performance?**
- 8. What does school climate mean to you?**
- 9. Describe the school climate in this school.**
- 10. Describe the principal's relationship with the faculty and staff.**
- 11. What does student success mean to you?**
- 12. What can teachers do individually and collectively to ensure the success of all students?**
- 13. In what ways is the school improvement plan operationalized in this school?**

**Appendix D**  
**Interview Protocol**

## **Interview Protocol**

**The interview protocol comprised the following questions:**

- 1. To what do you attribute the success this school has experienced over the last three or more years?**
- 2. What barriers or challenges have you experienced or observed related to this school's efforts to improve?**

**In addition to the key questions for the focus group, the researcher posed the following probing questions as applicable:**

- 1. What does shared decision making mean to you?**
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- 4. In what ways does teacher involvement in shared decision help improve student performance?**
- 5. What does school climate mean to you?**
- 6. Describe the school climate in this school.**
- 7. Describe the principal's relationship with the faculty and staff.**
- 8. What does student success mean to you?**
- 9. What can teachers do individually and collectively to ensure the success of all students?**
- 10. In what ways is the school improvement plan operationalized in this school?**

## **Vita**

**Annie Lunette Todd**

**Birthdate:**     **August 20, 1948**

**Birthplace:**   **Blackstone, Virginia**

**Education:**

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| <b>1995-1996</b> | <b>The College of William and Mary<br/>Williamsburg, Virginia<br/>Educational Specialist Degree in Educational<br/>Administration</b> |
| <b>1986-1991</b> | <b>Virginia State University<br/>Petersburg, Virginia<br/>Certification in Educational Administration</b>                             |
| <b>1976-1980</b> | <b>Virginia State University<br/>Petersburg, Virginia<br/>Master of Arts in English Education</b>                                     |
| <b>1966-1971</b> | <b>Saint Paul's College<br/>Lawrenceville, Virginia<br/>Bachelor of Science in English</b>  |